



BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION  
TO  
VEDANTA

P. Nagaraja Rao

GENERAL EDITORS

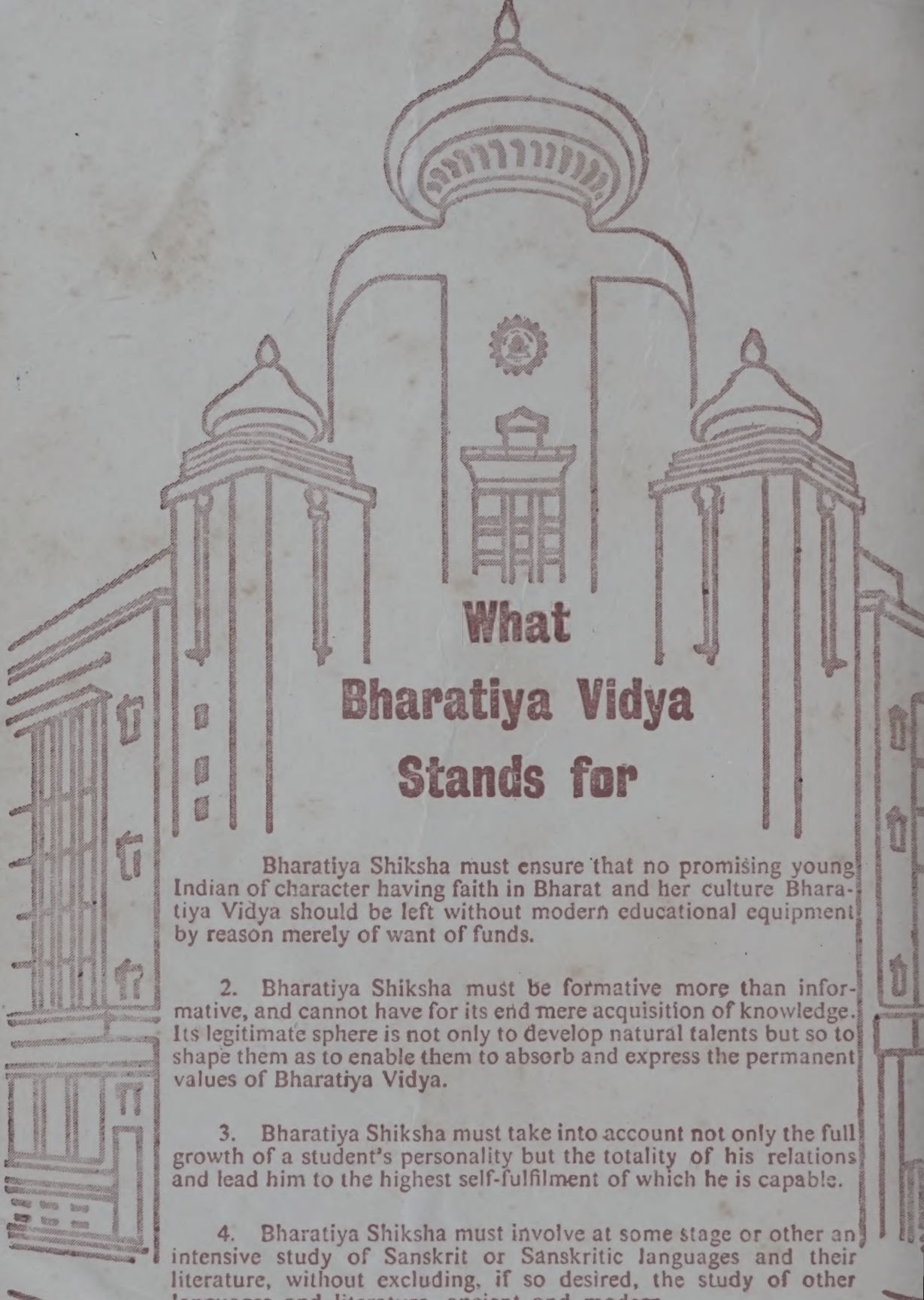
M. MUNSHI

R. DIWAKAR



SHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY





## What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.



with great respect to Sri Somadatta

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

- (a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and
- (b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—
  - (i) respect for the teacher,
  - (ii) a spirit of inquiry,
  - (iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.



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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

*Let noble thoughts come to us from every side*

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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**BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY**

*General Editors*

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR

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**INTRODUCTION TO VEDANTA**

BY

P. NAGARAJA RAO

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# INTRODUCTION TO VEDANTA

BY

P. NAGARAJA RAO



1960

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHAUPATTY, BOMBAY



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First Edition : 1958  
Second Edition : October, 1960  
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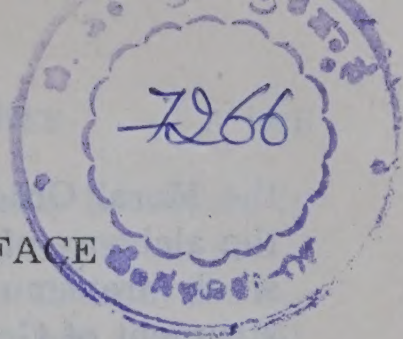
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ಬಂದ ತಾ|| 2-7-2001 .....  
ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ 2-00 .....  
OAG

Price Rs. 2/-, Sh. 3/6, \$ 0.90  
Rupee Price (Outside India), Rs. 2.25

PRINTED IN INDIA

BY P. H. RAMAN AT THE ASSOCIATED ADVERTISERS AND PRINTERS,  
505, ARTHUR ROAD, TARDEO, BOMBAY 7, AND PUBLISHED BY  
S. RAMAKRISHNAN, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,  
BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY 7





## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of Books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2/-.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of



the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere". After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and



of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,  
NEW DELHI,  
3rd October, 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI





## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

IT is a pleasure for me to know that the second edition of the book is called for within such a short time. I have taken this opportunity to revise the book and include substantial matter gathered from my reading of the new publications. I have introduced a new and long chapter on the Triple Texts which form the basis of all the schools of Vedānta. I have recast the chapter on the Philosophy of Madhva, on the advice of a few scholars of that school. Each chapter is made self-contained and this has made some repetition unavoidable. My special thanks are due to Sri S. Ramakrishnan for the interest he has taken in seeing the book through the press. I thank the Publication Department for the care they have bestowed in looking through the proofs. Here I place my humble effort before interested students of Philosophy with the prayerful appeal to scholars.

*Pramāṇa-siddhānta-viruddham atra  
Yat kincid uktam mati māndya doṣāt  
Mātsaryam utsārya tad ārya-cittāḥ  
Prasādam ādhāya viśodhayantu.*

—Hemacandra

“May the noble-minded scholars, instead of cherishing ill-will, kindly correct any errors here, committed through dullness of intellect in the way of wrong statements and interpretations.”





## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

In the present work an attempt is made to state the fundamental tenets of the different Schools of Vedānta, in a connected manner; interpretation, comparison and criticism are not excluded. The aim of the book is to give a comprehensive account of the philosophical heritage of Vedānta in all its aspects.

In the first chapter the reader is introduced to a critique of Science, as a methodology and as the complex of values. Its limitations and merits are examined. Next, the nature and function of Philosophy as conceived by the West is explained. The third chapter is an account of the "Spirit and Substance of Indian Philosophy". Among the Hindus the philosophical and religious values are conveyed through systems of philosophy, which are associated with the names of the great ācāryas, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, etc. Vedānta in one form or other is the living religion of the Hindus; hence, some of the general and common problems of the Vedānta system are discussed in chapter four. The chapters, that follow, present the systems of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Caitanya and Śaiva Siddhānta. The concluding chapter is a brief account of religion of Vedānta as conceived by Śaṅkara. There is some repetition in the different sections of the book and it is not avoided as it secures a certain completeness of presentation and unity to the systems. Every system is a living spiritual guide and represents a way of life.

In the preparation of this work, I owe more than I can ever express or assess to the writing and speeches of my Professor, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. I

thank all those who have in some manner or other helped me to understand the spirit of the Vedānta texts. I am deeply thankful to the editors of the different philosophical journals for the permission to use and reproduce the materials of the articles published in their journals. Professor V. M. Inamdar of the Karnatak College kindly read the proofs and saw the book through the Press, for which act I thank him.

My special thanks are due to the executives of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for publishing this volume in their Book University Series.

DHARWAR.

26th January 1958.

P. NAGARAJA RAO.



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*Inscribed to the two devotees of*

Lord Pāndurāṅga,

Sri Mysore Swami Rao

*and*

Srimati Sant Saraswati Bai,

with love, respect and gratitude.





## Chapter I

### THE SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK AND HUMAN VALUES

In the process of Evolution through ages, the emergence of Man marks a definite epoch. Evolution is automatic and blind, at the inorganic and biological levels. The inorganic sector of Reality is by far the greatest in extent and it comprises the overwhelming bulk of the cosmos, including the interstellar space and the material aggregates we call stars. The rate of change at this level is slow and is due to *Physical Interaction*.

Evolution, at the organic level, in the biological sector, is confined to the surface of our small planet, the earth. The rate of change at this level is swifter than at the inorganic level. The general traits of life are nutrition, variation, growth, reproduction and repair. Nature does all the work for animals and plants. The mode of change at biological level is described *natural selection*.

To describe man as the highest product of Evolution is a simple biological fact. Evolution becomes self-conscious at the human stage. 'The uniqueness of Man' is the most profound biological finding of our day. The rate of Evolution at the human level is enormously accelerated. It is no longer automatic and blind. Man is described as the 'trustee of human progress'. He stands at the cross-roads of Evolution. It is for him to progress further or sink back into animal savagery. Nature does not help him to go on without his own effort. Men do not bloom like flowers nor put forth fruits as trees do.

Evolution, in Biology, stands for a particular type of orderly change, namely, the production of new and specific forms of life arising in the process of differentiation and integration, through accumulated chance variations. The progress of human civilisation and culture is measured in terms of the rational criterion of value.<sup>1</sup>

Man's uniqueness consists in his power of speech, imagination and conceptual thought. He has, in the words of Lewis Mumford, an extra-organic environment and a super-organic self. He has become increasingly independent of his environment, has altered the face of the earth and gained enormous control over the forces of Nature and has glutted the modern world with marvels.

The great achievement of man is the result of his powers of speech and thought. The *word* and the *dream* are his great assets. Reason has enabled him to acquire knowledge, to build on it, to appreciate the significance of knowledge, to create values, to work out purposes, to incorporate social and ethical values into institutions. Language is the greatest invention of man. Reason is his fundamental asset.

Man's power of thought has most vigorously expressed itself in his scientific achievement. Science is not merely an instrument for man's material progress but is also the means for understanding Nature and man's place in the universe. It is one of the greatest achievements of man, the noblest activity and has given us boundless opportunities to lessen our drudgery. It has given inexhaustible material gifts which have added to the health and resources of the human community. In the vivid words of Professor Joad,

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1. Julian Huxley, *The Uniqueness of Man*, pp. 1 to 21.



"we can speak across continents and oceans, instal television sets in home, hear Big Ben striking in North Borneo; photographs speak and sing; x-rays are the windows through which we observe and snap-shot our insides; roads are made out of rubber; crops are ripened by electricity, hair waved by electric current; distance melts and aeroplane girdles the earth." Further, Science has given us cheap coal and cotton, revolutionised transport and in a hundred ways changed and ameliorated the burden of life.

To the marvels of wireless, x-rays, are added the discovery of sulphonamide group of drugs and antibiotic specifics like penicillin. The discoveries of the science of Endocrinology and Psychiatry prove that 'a wise conditioning and the proper supply of the secretions to the ductless glands can cure all the evils of life.' No longer do we believe that demons create diseases and priests cure them. The mentally deficient are advised and not condemned. Psychical abnormalities are cured through the methods of hypnosis, dream-analysis, electric-shock treatment and mental hygiene. The weak, the wounded and the over-strained souls turn for comfort to psycho-analysis. The therapeutic value of the process has given it the prestige of a science. It has banished the concept of sin from the ethical vocabulary.

It is the spectacular achievement of science and the marvels of technology that are responsible for our faith in the omnipotence of science. In the words of Russell "one hundred and fifty years of science have proved more explosive than five thousand years of pre-scientific culture."<sup>2</sup>

Science has added to the three values, Truth,

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2. Russell's *Scientific Outlook*, p. 9.

Beauty and Goodness, a fourth called the *Useful*, which has produced enough goods for man to live in comfort.

The rapid advances in scientific technique have out-matched the necessary social wisdom and enlightened conscience of man to use them well. Nature for a very long time yielded small extensions of licence to him. In the words of Charles Morgan, "Man in all his fight with Nature, though heroically defiant was at root humble. He knew himself outmatched. It did not occur to him that she, the mighty, the powerful, the enduring and the stubborn would ever abdicate in favour of man all her powers."<sup>3</sup> This has perplexed him to the most. The new dispensation of science is our trouble and man was not prepared for such a windfall. This has led to the dogmatic assertion that each development of man's power over Nature is beneficent. The gifts of science and technology are not unqualifiedly good in themselves. We have so many undesirable elements wrapped up in the gifts of science.

Every addition to human power that science has put into the hands of man equally involves the chance of its misuse. We are like the new rich who have come into a fortune but are too uneducated to spend it intelligently.<sup>4</sup> Scientific knowledge is power. More than knowledge and power, we must know how to use it. Science produces all things: on the one hand poison gas and the atom bomb and on the other, penicillin and sulpha drugs. The question of Ends is not the task of science; we need to know the ends to which they must be used and the knowledge of Good and Evil is another

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3. Charles Morgan, *The Burning Glass*. See Preface.

4. R. W. Livingstone, *Education and The Spirit of the Age*, pp. 65 to 109.

branch of human study. We must know the right ends for the proper use of scientific power. Knowledge and power are not ends in themselves. They must be grounded in human love and not aim at mere knowledge and vain glory.<sup>5</sup>

Science has raised many problems, thrown our minds into confusion and exposed us to temptations which we are not equipped to stand. If we are to progress, we need, not only speed but a sense of direction also. The soundness of a civilisation is to be judged by what man does with the gifts of science. Ruskin, the nineteenth century prophet of social justice, declared: "No changing of place at a hundred miles an hour, nor making of stuffs a thousand yards a minute, will make us one whit stronger, happier or wiser. There was always more in the world than men could see: they will see it no better for going fast. . . . As for being able to talk from place to place, that is, indeed, well and convenient; but suppose you have originally nothing to say! We shall at last be obliged to confess, what we should have long known, that the really precious things are thought and sight and not pace. It does a bullet no good to go fast and a man, if he be truly a man, no harm to go slow; for his *glory is not at all in going but in being.*"<sup>6</sup>

Science has placed us in the possession of great power and we should equip ourselves with such know-

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5. Leonard Da Vinci's *Note Books*. P. 96-97. He writes (speaking about submarines) "How by an appliance many are able to remain for some time under water. How and why, I do not describe the method....this I do not publish or divulge on account of the evil nature of men who would practise assassination at the bottom of the sea in their lowest parts and sinking them together with the crews."

6. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, III, P. 324.



ledge as is necessary for a proper use of it. Plato and the *Upaniṣads* declare that the knowledge of Good and Evil are absolutely necessary, for a proper use of scientific power. Plato writes, "It is not the life of knowledge, not even if it included all the sciences, that creates happiness and well-being, but a single branch of knowledge—the science of Good and Evil. If you exclude this from other branches, medicine will be equally able to give us health, shoemaking shoes and weaving clothes. Seamanship will still save life at sea and strategy win battles. But without the knowledge of Good and Evil, the use and the excellence of these sciences will be found to have failed us."<sup>7</sup>

Thomas Traherne the seventeenth century mystic writes movingly, "He that knows the secrets of Nature with Albertus Magnus, or the motions of heavens with Galileo, or the cosmography of the moon with Helvetius, or the body of man with Galen, or the nature of diseases with Hippocrates, or the harmonies in melody with Orpheus, or of poetry with Homer, or of grammar with Lily, or of whatever else with the greatest artist; he is nothing if he merely knows them merely for talk or idle speculation, or transient and external use. But he that knows them for value, and knows them his own, shall profit infinitely."

The faculty of *reason* can only execute the ends proposed to it, it cannot determine the right ends. It does not operate in a vacuum. It has to work in the midst of desires, passions, impulses, emotions, drives from the unconscious. It was Erasmus that exclaimed. "Look at Providence. He has confined reason to the

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7. Plato, *Charmides*, 174.

cells of the brain and allowed passions the whole body to range". Reason adapts just the means to ends. It has nothing to do with the choice of right ends. Further modern Psychoanalysis declares that reason is not merely the slave of our passions but is also the result of the drives of the unconscious. Reason is neutral in its objective. It can be used for good as well as bad ends. It is at best an instrument without a handle. In the words of Tagore, "Reason is all blade and no handle." It cuts both the ways. The impenitent Rationalist's life is stark and bleak and lacks all warmth and glow of life.

We have so far examined the limitations of the scientific technique. Science is not mere technique, it is an outlook of life, which goes under the name of rationalism. As a mode of understanding the world, it is objective. "It is the result of man's gradual understanding, the kind of knowledge we can rely on in action. It is neither revealed by God, nor spun out of the head of Aristotle, but is come at by observation and experiment."<sup>8</sup> It is not purely deductive thinking. It balances and checks deductive thinking by observation and experiment. It is not dogmatic and it suspends its judgment and does not recklessly repudiate when evidence is not there. The impulse to science first arose out of curiosity, the desire to know and understand Nature. Technology which helps us to successfully manipulate Nature is a later product. What was a camp follower has assumed the command of the forces today.

The scientific frame of mind is unruffled in any context. The scientist must be critical, impartial, free from likes and dislikes, disinterested, cautious, un-

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8. Max Eastman.



committed, non-assertive and tentative in his statements. The scientific outlook declares that we can arrive at sufficiently probable truth and not always at the absolutely certain truths. The scientist is alert, nimble, patient to doubt, fond to observe, slow to assert and ready to reconsider.

Science with its definite instruments has measured a great deal of Reality. It does not indent on the supernatural, nor does it take into account those aspects of Reality that are not measurable. It has nothing to do with those entities or values that are supersensuous, hyper-physical and time-transcending. The scientist<sup>9</sup> abstracts a simplified private universe from the entire Reality. He arbitrarily chooses those qualities which his methods allow him to deal with successfully. The technique leads to astonishing success. "This success was intoxicating and, with an illogicality which, in the circumstances, was doubtlessly pardonable, made many scientists and philosophers to imagine that this useful abstraction is Reality itself."

We find that science leaves out a good deal. Its writ does not run in all the realms of life. It incompletely covers life. To many of our questions it has no answer. It tells us only how things happen and not why they happen so. It cannot explain values or the immortal creations of literature. Sir Richard Livingston observes, "When we read Homer or Dante or Shakespeare, listen to a symphony of Beethoven, gaze at the Parthenon or the paintings in Sistine chapel, science has little light to throw on what we feel or why we feel it. More goes to produce the effect of Leonardo's Last Supper, than a wall surface, a variety

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9. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, pp. 265-280.



of paint and the physical constitution of the human eye: Beethoven's symphonies are not merely the wood and metal, catgut and waves of air through which they pass into the audible sound."<sup>10</sup>

Further, science cannot tell us the way to properly use power in the right direction. It again and again tells us that we should entertain a rational outlook on life and give up our outmoded ways of thinking. The scientific outlook makes a fervent plea for reason. The powers of thought and reason are considered as greater than any other human power. But human experience in the moral situations of life point to the inefficacy of reason to help them to do the right and tread the straight path. In man, emotions, instincts, appetites and urges of the unconscious are very powerful. The man who knows how to reason well, tells his lies more ingeniously and persuasively than the uneducated. Cardinal Newman declared, "Quarry the granite rock with razors or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend these giants—the passion and pride of man."<sup>11</sup>

The limitations of science are of two types. The scientific temper of mind, with its insistence on the empirical approach, through the methods of observation and experiment, confines science to the region of the sense and reason. For a long time, this definition which excludes *intuition* as a method of arriving at truths is responsible for the conflict between Science and Religion. Religion is based on faith and intuition

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10. Sir Richard Livingstone, *Some Tasks of Education*, p. 10-11.

11. John Henry Newman, *On the Scope and the Nature of University Education*, p. 4.

and science on logical reasoning. This position is being assailed by many savants today. There is a desire now to reconcile Science and Religion without sacrificing their distinctiveness. "The next great task of science," said Morley, "is to create a religion for mankind." The antithesis between Science and Religion is being brought down by a study of the process of scientific discovery. The purely empirical approach does not help us to build a perfect science. Einstein writes that "every attempt at a logical deduction of the basic concepts and postulates of mechanics, from elementary experience is doomed to failure." He adds that "the supreme task of the physical science is to arrive at those universal elementary laws from which the cosmos can be built up by pure deduction". "Here is no logical path to these laws; only intuition resting on sympathetic understanding of experience can reach them."

In a recent volume Arthur Koestler has argued that the great scientific discoveries are not merely the result of clear rational advance, along a straight ascending line. The scientists are not reasoning machines set on marble pedestals. The title of Koestler's volume is *Sleep-walker*. He argues from a detailed study of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo that intuition plays a great part in scientific discoveries. The individual discoveries are not a pure rational process, a continuous curve. It is sometimes the result of an unexpected by-product of a "chase after quite different hares." The brilliant individual scientific discoveries remind one more of a sleep-walker's performance than electronic brains; so we cannot say that scientific discoveries are confined to the deliverances of sense and reason.



Further, the mystery of human life is incompletely unravelled by science. A verse in the Gītā reflects the limitations of science. For, science just studies the middle state of things; the origins and ends remain unknown.<sup>11a</sup>

Science and Religion are being sought to be reconciled, on the view that Nature is the revelation of the Lord. All scientific discovery is God's disclosure to man. The late Dean Inge, writing about the failure of Rationalism, says, "The Rationalist tries to find a place for God in his picture of the world. But God whose centre is everywhere and His circumference nowhere, cannot be filled into a diagram. He is the canvas on which the picture is painted, or the frame in which it is set."

Modern science with its technology has made men like A. Huxley think that the growth of science has enabled dictators to effectively keep millions under their control. The mechanical and the military enemies of freedom apart (not that they are unimportant), science has devised other possibilities that make tyranny easy. Technological advances have enabled man to organise to the maximum. Overorganisation has led to the creation of an ant-hill society. Men are de-individualised and have lost the capacity of being fully human. We have a dull society where men are identical in their dress, wants, ways of life and modes of pleasure. We have become robots, unthinking perfect machines adjusted to modes of existence to which we are conditioned. This conditioning is made possible by efficient means of mass communication at the command of tyrants, like *radio, television, the process of painless mental manipulation, the use of drugs* e.g.

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11a. Gītā, II, v. 28.



*Soma* which is a powerful sedative, and *sleep-teaching*. The technique of modern propaganda in the hands of a skilful scientist, with his numerous means of communication process, is more effective than rational thought. In the armoury of the scientifically perfected modern dictator, the drugs like *Soma* play a great part. The drug by its sedative influence prevents men from their personal maladjustment, from the spread of subversive ideas and social unrest. Large doses of *Soma* give us a feeling of bliss and conjure up visions. The drug consoles, compensates and calls up visions. By the use of systematic violence on individuals, it reduces them to a stage of utter fatigue and makes them highly suggestible. Those who have survived chronic anxiety and starvation, emerge as a result of suggestion and sleep-teaching, as new men recreated in the image of their new God and totally dedicated to his service. Human beings when exposed to such techniques of propaganda no wonder become uninterested in freedom and the right of dissent. Men become like those birds which have learnt to gulp up a good living without using wings and consequently renounce the privilege of flight and remain ever grounded. Even the best stoic among us cannot resist indefinitely the thrilling falsehood and the skilful approach to passions. The stress is hard and insistent and fairly prolonged. All these scientific discoveries are the subtle enemies of freedom. They have worked wonderfully and rational thought which is unexciting has no chance against them.

Scientific technique if it is not relieved or corrected by the great Human Value of freedom is bound to bring about the death of the individual and along with it the creative urge in man. Religion

and philosophy seek to restore the proper balance between the role and importance of the individual and society. The individual is the centre. He is responsible for all initiative and progress in thought. To negate the diversity of men is to dehumanise man. We must respect the genetic uniqueness of the individual. Nature has gone into endless trouble to see every individual is unlike every other individual.

The craze and scientific technique have drowned the individual in the collective mass and have made his survival possible only if he forgets the rights of man and upholds "the rights of collectivity". No longer individual virtues count. The virtues that are held up for admiration are 'team work', 'group loyalty', social skill and group dynamics.

Under these circumstances it is urgent we realise that we must not only stem and halt the tide of anti-freedom campaign but reverse the current. Freedom alone can make us complete human individuals.

Human individuals alone can contribute to creative thought in any branch. Without it there is no progress. Without progress society stagnates. If the individual is denied freedom, he ceases to use his intelligence. Without intelligence and its free use love is impotent and freedom unattainable. If we are to live as full humans we must not be psychological captives. The more overorganised our society, the less the chances for an individual to be free. Science is necessary but not sufficient. The poet Wordsworth writes.

Science appears but what in truth she is,  
Not as our glory and our absolute boast,  
But as ..... a prop  
To our infirmity.

On the theoretical plane science lays great stress on the analytical outlook. It forgets the role of intuition. Great discoveries are the result of vision and intuition. Leslie Stephen observes, "Genius begins where intellect ends; or takes by storm where intellect has to make elaborate approaches according to the rules of scientific strategy. *One sees Truth and another demonstrates.*"<sup>12</sup> The extreme method of analysis disables us from appreciating the work of art. A. N. Whitehead points out that "when we understand all about the sun, and all about the atmosphere, and all about the radiation of the earth, you may still miss the radiance of the sunset."<sup>13</sup> For that, we need a deeper intuition of the human spirit. Hence, Whitehead recommends that we should urge sciences beyond their delusive air of finality.<sup>14</sup>

The rational scientific approach to life yields certain conclusions and points to a view of life which is strictly deterministic. The conclusions of mechanistic physics, biology and psycho-analysis make short work of the cherished values of man and do not give him the necessary ardent fervour for a moral life.

Freud in his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* observes that "humanity has in the course of time to endure from the hands of science several shocks which undermine its prestige." Copernicus declared that our earth is not the centre of the universe and by this he abolished the primacy of our planet. The theory of Evolution declared that man is not born full, faultless and finished. He is one among other com-

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12. Sir Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, Vol. III, p. 162.

13. A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 285. See Wordsworth 'our meddling intellect misshapes the beauteous forms of things. We murder to dissect'.

14. A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 199.



plicated natural objects. He is not constructed by Nature upon any new principle which she has not used in those less exalted achievements which we call animals.<sup>15</sup> He is not compounded from any different elements. He can be reduced to a few pounds of carbon, a few quarts of water, a little phosphorus and sulphur, a pinch of iron and silicon, a handful of mixed salts all scattered and recombined.

The Hormic school of psychology declares that seventeen instincts 'are the prime movers of Humanity'. Freud's discovery of the *Unconscious* and its function was the last of the shocks science administered to the grandiosity of man. The scientific picture of man is so narrow that it leaves out the experience of the values that man cherishes. It confines itself purely to sense-experience and the mechanical conception of cause. It is the inner experience that discloses the true nature of man which explains the pursuit of the ideals. Man is not the mere observable personality, not an inefficient fertiliser. There is something in him deeper than his feelings, the very spring of instinct and intuition, the original unsilenceable whisper of the soul. Man in his essence is not an animal with effective volition, nor a mere instrument of material force, nor a play-thing of blind fate. He is an immortal spirit with an effective will. But for this spirit many of man's acts remain a mystery to us. "He propounds mathematical theorems in beleagured cities, composes and conducts metaphysical arguments in condemned cells, cracks jokes on the scaffold".

Man's power, divorced from his spirit, and its manifestations, the word, the dream, mind and reason, is insignificant and nothing when compared to the

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15. McDougall, *Outline of Psychology*, p. 134.

mighty forces of Nature acting on him. Pascal urged that the minute human being who knows he is crushed is infinitely higher than the unknowing mass, however vast, which crushes him. It is man that has given significance to life. The physical universe remained insignificant until man interpreted it. That is the uniqueness of man. It is his double nature, the combination of the "Ape and Essence" that makes him the greatest marvel of creation. The story of man is far more wonderful than all the wonders of physical science. "It is a mystery unsolved, yet it is a solid fact. It is divine, diabolic—in short, human."<sup>16</sup> "The proper study of man is man."

The scientific picture of the universe and the destiny of man, if it is not modified by other elements, makes us depressed. If the second Law of Thermodynamics is true, the prospects for humanity are gloomy. "A time will come when the sun goes out, a catastrophe that is bound to be, mankind will long ago have disappeared. The last inhabitant of the earth will be as destitute, as feeble, and as dull-witted as the first. They would have forgotten all the arts and all the sciences. They would huddle wretchedly in caves in the sides of the glaciers that will roll their transparent masses over the half-obliterated ruins of cities, where now men think and love, suffer and hope. The last desperate survivors of mankind will know nothing of our genius, nothing of our civilisation. One day the last man, callous alike to hate and love, will exhale to the unfriendly sky the last human breath and the globe will go rolling on, bearing with it through the silent fields of space, the ashes of huma-

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16. G. M. Trevelyan, *An Autobiography and other Essays*, p. 65.

nity, the pictures of Michaelangelo, and the remnants of the Greek marbles frozen to its icy surface.”<sup>17</sup>

Our age is an age of science. We are children of science and reason. The commitment is made and we cannot retrace our steps. Science is necessary; its outlook and methods are useful in many matters. But, it is wise to recognise and foolish to ignore its limitations.

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17. C. E. M. Joad, *Guide to Modern Thought*, p. 48.



## Chapter II

### THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF PHILOSOPHY

#### (The Western View)

It is as much the nature of man to seek the knowledge of human existence, the meaning of life, the nature and the destiny of man, the values that men and religions are in search of, as to seek food, sex, raiment, shelter and medical aid. To wonder and reflect on his acts, "to look before and after and pine for what is not," to praise and condemn are as natural to him, as to eat, drink and be merry. Man is an interrogating animal. He seeks not only bread but also understanding. He is not at peace with himself until he interprets the facts of life and gets at the meaning of life. He has been described variously as a 'rational animal', a 'metaphysical being.' Hegel declared that "it is only animals that are not metaphysical."

The desire to reflect and interpret, to question and answer the problems of life is philosophical activity. Philosophy is an adventure of the mind. It is an intellectual interpretation of Reality. It is a distinct approach to the understanding of Reality. It has its own specific methods. There is no use confusing it with other modes of apprehension such as Religion, Science and Art.

Philosophy is an attempt to think things out, in a systematic way. It employs the methods of perception and reason in its understanding and interpretation of Reality. A few make use of intuition. But it must not be forgotten that what is discovered by intuition is demonstrated by logic. Philosophy is

fundamentally an intellectual understanding of Reality.

The aim and object of philosophy is Truth. In the words of Hegel "it is the thinking consideration of things." It does not differ from Science in its objective. The philosopher's conception of Reality is wider and includes all human experience in it. In the words of F. H. Bradley, philosophy is a quest "*to gain possession of Reality but only in an ideal form.*"<sup>1</sup> Philosophical understanding does not aim at comfort, or salvation or *mokṣa* or escape from the troubles of the world. It does not care for security or rest. Philosophy seeks to satisfy the intellect and not surrender it. It does not accept things on faith, or from the revelation of any scripture. It seeks to know Reality with the help of reason. This attitude distinguishes it from religion and theology. Philosophy is not the dogmatic assertion of a set of beliefs. It is a body of "examined beliefs".<sup>2</sup> It argues its case and does not simply assert. It is critical, in the sense that it seeks to examine the fundamentals of thought. It goes into the inquiry of the primary causes. Some of the postulates of Science, such as Space, Time, Causation are problems of philosophy. Before turning the telescope on to the sky, it examines the instrument. Scientific truths are demonstrable and verifiable in a concrete sense. They can be repeated also. Philosophical truths are demonstrable and verifiable in a *logical sense*. They are tested by the criteria of consistency and non-contradiction. The deductions in philosophy are logical and are the work of pure reason. It seeks to understand the whole in terms of reasoning.

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1. F. H. Bradley: *Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 12.

2. W. C. Hocking's definition.



In the popular mind, there is the inveterate prejudice against philosophy, its nature and function. This is because of the ignorance of the significance of the term philosophy. This is responsible for the cheap jokes and revilement of philosophy. Some mistake philosophy for unintelligibility and so, declare that when A talks to B, and B to A, if both do not understand each other, it is metaphysics. Others mistake philosophy for 'useless knowledge' and describe it as the search for the black cat in a dark room where it is not. Some mistake philosophy for an unimaginative outlook and describe it as Keats does, 'Do not all charms fly at the mere touch of cold philosophy? Philosophy will clip an angel's wings.' Some expect romance from philosophy and, when disappointed, cry out with Romeo, "Hang up all philosophy, unless philosophy can make a Juliet." A few others have identified philosophy with gloom and burst out with Dr. Johnson that "all his life he tried to be a philosopher, and cheerfulness breaks in and makes it impossible for him to be a philosopher." They regard it as a kill-joy. Yet others have identified philosophy with a never-ending, inconclusive farrago of arguments leading us nowhere. Omar writes:

"Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and saint, and heard great argument  
About it and about; but ever more  
Came out by the same door as in I went."

These men regard philosophy as a series of marches and counter-marches, where we traverse and retrace the same ground. A few regard philosophy as a matter of one's temper. The philosophy a man chooses, declared Fichte, "depends upon the kind of



man he is." Some describe any kind of serious mood as philosophy.

The cheap gibes at philosophy are the result of ignorance. Philosophic spirit and knowledge are not things alien to man. It is man's distinguishing trait. Evolution has reached a very remarkable stage in man. Nature refuses to do anything for man. He has to make or mar his future. He is at the crossroads and he is the "trustee" of human history, in the words of Julian Huxley. Man is instinct with philosophy. He needs to find the meaning of life. Aldous Huxley writes: "It is impossible for man to live without a metaphysics. The choice is not between some kind of metaphysics and no metaphysics; it is always between a good metaphysic and a bad metaphysic."<sup>3</sup>

To think and reflect is the nature of man. To forbid it makes man non-human. It is impossible for man to cease asking questions or seeking answers, and to abstain from reflection and thought. The philosophical attitude is fundamental to man. It can be described as "the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct." Bradley retorts, "but to find these reasons is no less an instinct." Men do the philosophising in a confused, careless and slipshod manner. Philosophy requires them to do the job in a systematic manner. There is no point in asking us to philosophise but not fully. Bradley observes, "To reflect and wonder is human. We will only cease to do it when the twilight has no charms or man has ceased to be man."

Two principal objections are levelled by the enemies of philosophy. Some hold that philosophy and metaphysics are impossible. Others declare that it

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3. Aldous Huxley: *Ends and Means*, p. 252.

bakes no bread and is useless. "It is a flight from the objectives of immediate living and is a form of escapism. It is a tempting, fruitless exercise of the mind of man." It is the luxury of a lazy few who have nothing else to do. It is inconclusive in its results. It encourages the contemplative mood in us and weakens our action. It is absolutely unrelated to life. In the last analysis, it is practically no knowledge worth the name.

The objection that metaphysics is impossible, because our knowledge can never be complete and comprehensive is itself a rival theory of metaphysics. The declaration of the failure of metaphysics presupposes a knowledge of the criteria of Reality. So from this, we cannot argue to the impossibility of metaphysics.<sup>4</sup>

Philosophy is organic to the nature of man. To ponder, to reflect and to reason out is as much necessary for man as to love, hate and strive. To condemn philosophy is "to break with the noblest in the nature of man." To stop thought short of its final goal is to mutilate one aspect of human nature.

It is not true to say that philosophy has not advanced. The problems of philosophy have not remained the same. They have altered. The solutions to philosophical problems have been influenced by the general development of the sciences.

Some of the problems of philosophy are: (1) Is the universe a fortuitous collocation of atoms, or is it the embodiment of a design? (2) Is the evolution of life and the world purposive or is it a mere change? (3) Is there a soul? Is there God? Philosophy seeks to study the nature and function of values like Truth,

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4. F. H. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, Preface.



Beauty and Goodness. In the words of Dr. Joad, philosophy "defends Reason and affirms values."

The philosophical outlook is not very different from the scientific. It includes a few super-sensible and hyper-physical values in its study. It is because of this, Plato said that "the noblest of all studies is the study of what man should be and what he should pursue." Philosophy expresses itself in two forms. It is employed by some thinkers to construct a coherent system of thought to interpret Reality. We have different systems of philosophy such as Idealism, Realism, Naturalism, Theism, Absolutism, Pragmatism, Instrumentalism, Materialism, and the philosophies of Evolution. Each system has its own fine shades and able exponents. Great names like that of Plato, Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Whitehead, Santayana, stand out in the panorama of western philosophy.

The study of philosophical systems gives us a definite and rigorous mental discipline. It gives us the joy of pure thought, untainted by any sordid concern for utility. In the words of Collingwood, the ideal philosopher is resigned to the contempt of fools and worldly men and their success. It strengthens the contemplative bent of mind in us.

The nature of a philosophical system has to be clearly understood. In the words of Prof. E. A. Burtt, "Philosophy has much in common on the one hand with *naïve* reflections in which unsophisticated people engage; and on the other hand with the abstract and exact inquiries of Science." "It seeks essentially to transcend the limitations of science while respecting the fundamental standards of intellectual attainment upon which science has come to insist. It is a queer hybrid in the realm of reflective inquiry produced through



the fertilization of the spontaneous speculations of common sense about ultimate things by the responsible discipline of scientific logic. The philosopher is a child in his open-eyed wonderment at the world and a man of mature research in the critical and rigorous fashion in which that wonderment is satisfied."

Philosophy lays bare to us the influence of ideas. "Man lives not in a world of hard facts to which thoughts make no difference, but in a world of thoughts. If you change the moral, political, economic, theories generally accepted on which he lives, you change the character of the world also." The influence of ideas and their power over the minds of men can never be disputed. Things first happen in the mind of man and then are translated into action.

A few positive-minded men do not see any good in philosophy. They declare that it is useless knowledge. They hold that politicians and scientific inventors decide and guide the fate of nations and not philosophers. This is an old charge. Marx gives pointed expression to it: "Philosophers have interpreted Reality and not changed it. The need is to change it."

The process of interpretation is not passive. "*To interpret is also to change.*" The philosophical outlook is not without its great benefits. It influences our thoughts and through it our actions. Its great value is that "it protects us from dogmatic superstition on the one hand, and from commonplace materialism on the other." It also makes us not to fall a prey to "stupid fanaticism and dishonest sophistry." Philosophy when genuinely pursued satisfies the mystical nature in man. "It is sweet as Apollo's lute", is the verdict of Milton.

The general influence of philosophy on the thought of man is liberal. It restores the perspective we need. In the eloquent words of Bertrand Russell, "Philosophy enables us to fight the triple evils of life, *error, hatred and strife*, with knowledge, love and service. In thought, philosophy enables man to rise above the life of the senses, seeking what is always general and open to all men. In desire and will, it aims simply at the good without regarding the good as mine or yours. The impartiality philosophy instils in us leads us to truth in thought, justice in action and universal love in feeling."<sup>5</sup>

Philosophy may not produce goods. It gives us a clear understanding of the problems of life. It liberates the individual from the tyranny of narrow ideas and eager wishes. It has a quality of infinity about it. Its indirect effect on our outlook and on life is to make us feel how trifling and little are our conflicts and acerbities in comparison with the cosmos. Philosophy teaches us the spirit of toleration and forbearance.

In the recent UNESCO discussion on philosophy, five reasons are given as to why philosophy should be taught in our universities. (1) It supplies a basis for synthesizing knowledge as a whole. (2) It causes a student to reflect and judge and to think for himself. (3) It classifies and refines appreciation of humanistic values and establishes their universality. (4) It promotes respect for others, freedom, tolerance and deeper understanding of man. (5) It helps the individual to form ideas on all problems and to assume his proper place in society. Philosophers in the West have constructed imposing systems of thought by the

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5. Bertrand Russell: *Outlines of Philosophy*; (last chapter).



use of critical methods. A particular branch of philosophy called Epistemology enquires into the origin, nature, certainty and extent of human knowledge, together with the grounds and degrees of belief. It also describes, as to how we come to acquire knowledge, the several sources of knowledge, the nature of knowledge and the criteria of truth and error.

Metaphysics in short is the science of the nature of Reality. Logic and Ethics assume the existence of the values e.g. Truth and Goodness. The task of logic is to know how Truth is to be attained. It does not ask the question, "Is Truth possible?" That is the problem for metaphysics.

The great philosophers of the West have employed different methods in the construction of their systems. The closest method to common sense adopted by the philosophers is the empirical method. *Empiricism* holds the view that all human knowledge comes from sense-experience and whatever cannot be verified by experience is not real. Locke, Hume and many modern Logical Positivists hold to the method of *empiricism*.

Some like Descartes have employed the method of *Scepticism* for arriving at philosophical truths. The Cartesian method of doubt consists in doubting all things that are not clear and distinct. There are different uses to which scepticism is put to in philosophy. Descartes doubted in order to arrive at a dogma. T. S. Eliot writes, "For every man who thinks and lives by thought, must have his own scepticism, that which stops at the question, that which ends in denial, or that which leads to faith." Humean scepticism is academic. It did not interfere with his life.

A third method of philosophy is the faith in reason



and its workings. It is called *Rationalism* (not in the modern sense of the term). This school holds that the Real is rational and that thought construction agrees with the actual world in which we live and move. Reality is open to the gaze of thought. Hegel upheld this view. He put forward the dialectic method.

A fourth method in Western Philosophy is *Intuitionism*. The anti-Rationalists did not believe in the efficacy of reason; so they declared that reason cannot give us the whole of Reality. It is a defective instrument and is incapable of grasping the flow of Reality. Bergson advocated the method of intuition to grasp Reality. He made it popular.

Some Idealists hold that Reality can be comprehended only in a transcendent mystical experience. They are critical of the intellect and have convicted the relational way of knowledge, adopted in Logic, as contradictory. They hold that spiritual experience alone can make us know Reality.

Yet another method of philosophy, very popular in America is the *Pragmatism* of James and Dewey. They hold the view that truth lies in successful willing and not in copying an Absolute. Pragmatism and Instrumentalism have paved the way for a secular Humanism. Their slogan is, "man is the measure of all things."

Some of our contemporary philosophers have built their imposing metaphysical systems on the conclusions of Physics and Biology. Whitehead, Eddington, Alexander, Morgan, Julian Huxley are some who have used Biology and Physics for their foundation.

Professor A. N. Whitehead in his preface to the book, *Science and the Modern World*, sums up the function and importance of Philosophy best. He

writes: "Philosophy, in one of its functions, is the critic of cosmologies. It is in its function to harmonise, refashion, and justify divergent intuitions as to the nature of things. It has to insist on the scrutiny of ultimate ideas and on the retention of the whole of evidence in shaping our cosmological scheme. Its business is to render explicit, and—so as may be efficient, a process which otherwise is unconsciously performed without rational test.....If my view of the function of Philosophy is correct, it is the most effective of all the intellectual pursuits. It builds cathedrals before the workmen have moved a stone, and it destroys them before the elements have worn their arches. It is the architect of the buildings of the spirit and it is also their solvent."

### Chapter III

## THE SPIRIT AND SUBSTANCE OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

The term "Indian Philosophy" comprehends the groups of philosophical systems that have originated from the spiritual experience of the sages of ancient India, subsequently elaborated into systems of thought and explained in terms of reason and logic. They are called *darśanas*. They are not the fruits of mere intellectual speculation.

The antiquity of Indian philosophic thought has not remained a mere matter of history. It has had a living and growing influence on the thought and life of Indians through thirty centuries. It has preserved its spirit through the ages in spite of repeated invasions, social convulsions and frequent upheavals—through all the vicissitudes of India's fortune. The spirit of Indian philosophic thought has a strange vitality, a strong and sound instinct for life, which has made it *mṛityunjaya* (triumphant over death). In every age we have some representative of the philosophic spirit of India. No age is without its witness.

Indian philosophic thought has permeated all aspects of Indian life and literature. It has determined and coloured the themes of Indian drama, literature and art, the social structure and ethical ideals. One of the living systems of Indian philosophy, the Vedānta, is to some Western intellectuals a solace and a solution to the vexed problems of the world. They believe it embodies the general principles of the universal religion that we need today.

Tradition divides Indian philosophy into two



groups—one the orthodox group (*āstika darśanas*), e.g. the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, systems. They believe in the authority of Vedas. In this group of six systems, the Mīmāṃsā and the Vedānta base themselves directly on the teaching of the Vedas and accept nothing that goes contrary to them. They make use of reason to explain the truths of revelation, i.e., the body of the spiritual experience of the Ṛṣis. The other four systems of the group are based more on independent grounds of logic and reasoning, but they too are not opposed to the scriptures. Not content merely to swear by the scriptures, they seek to confirm and reassure themselves of the contents of the scriptures through reasoning. The difference is in the distribution of emphasis.

The second group comprehends Buddhism, Jāinism and the Cārvāka school, which do not owe any allegiance to the Vedas, hence, these systems are described as the *nāstika darśanas*. They originate from the spiritual experiences of the prophets, Gautama the Buddha and Mahāvīra.

All the nine systems constitute Indian philosophy. Before attempting a detailed study of them, we should try to understand the general characteristics of Indian philosophy, and its pervasive climate of thought.

Its range and variety are astonishing. All shades of opinion are there, Realism, Idealism, Pluralism, Monism, Dualism, Monotheism, Theism. In the words of Professor Hiriyanṇa, “we have all the different shades of philosophic theory repeated twice over in India, once in the six systems and again in Buddhism.”

Most of the philosophical systems do not make any reference to the personalities that set them forth.

In the words of Max Müller, "of the philosophers hardly anything remains to us beyond their names." They cared more for the truths they expounded, than for their names.

The Indian philosophical ideal is different from that of the West. The Indian systems seek to attain a state of existence called *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is the highest good, *parama puruṣārtha* (the ultimate value). All the other values of life subserve the realization of the highest good and result in it. The Indian outlook is synthetic, integrated and concentrated in the attainment of *mokṣa*.

To the question "Why seek *mokṣa*?" the answer is the need for the radical termination of the sorrows of life. All the systems begin with a reflective examination of the state of human life and find in it a good deal of sorrow. *Samsāra* is full of sorrow. Philosophy originated in India under the pressure of a practical need to overcome and destroy the threefold suffering to which man is heir to. It is the master radical remedy for the ills of life.

*Mokṣa* is the master word in Indian philosophy according to Sri Aurobindo. It is a state of perfection. The ideal of *mokṣa* is not conceptual. It is the result of integral experience. Mere intellectual study will not enable us to attain it. It implies moral discipline. It is a religious ideal. It is beyond logic and also beyond mere morality. It is not the mere acquisition of knowledge or mere self-culture, but a certain immediate experience resulting from both. In that state, all our doubts and disbeliefs are dispelled and our strife and tensions are overcome. This practical and pragmatic motive is the dominant note in all the systems. This objective has made some

describe Indian philosophy as purely religious.

The object of Indian philosophy is not merely to advance in knowledge or to find a correct way of thinking. It is more a right way of living. "It is a way of life, not a mere view of life." It is essentially a philosophy of values. The Indian philosophical ideal is a direct experience of Reality and not a mere intellectual mode of apprehending it.

The ideal is significant. *Mokṣa* is eternal. There is no lapse from it, once it is attained, no return from *mokṣa* to *samsāra*. It is absolute, and never becomes a means to other ends. It is an end in itself. All the systems describe *mokṣa* as their ideal. The Nyāya declares that *mokṣa* results from the realisation of the true nature of Reality. The Sāṅkhya speaks of the destruction of the threefold misery as the consequence of the discriminate knowledge between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. The Vedānta declares that the knower of the Self overcomes all sorrows.

The ideal of *mokṣa* has over-shadowed the logical acumen of the systems. The knowledge of the polemical texts of the various systems will bear out the dialectical subtlety, logical analysis, formal precision and coherent inter-relation of the concepts in Indian systems. A study of these aspects will convince the student of the philosophical worth of each system. It will regale the most ardent admirer of metaphysics and pure thought, and the untrained may well feel baffled on occasions. It is clear that there is no want of logic in Indian philosophical systems.

Indian philosophical systems pay great attention to epistemology (*pramāṇas*). Max Müller observes that the very first question that every one of the Indian systems of philosophy tries to settle is, "How



do we know?" The Mīmāṃsakas have formulated the dictum that "the establishment of the cognition of a thing depends upon the instruments of knowledge." Every system has its theory of knowledge, and its doctrines of Truth and Error.

Indian philosophy is not, as in the contemporary West, a mere attempt to analyse and clarify concepts, beliefs and meanings of words. It is the search for an experience of Reality. The subject-matter of Indian philosophy, however, is not the entire Reality. It is more, the true nature of the Self. One of the postulates of Indian philosophy is that the soul in its intrinsic nature is bliss. The realization of the true and native nature of the Self is another name for *mokṣa*. The Self to be realized is not the individual ego that we are aware of. We mistake the ego for the true Self and that is the cause of our suffering. The ignorance of the true nature of the Self, which is free from all impurities and sorrows, is the cause of bondage. This ignorance is called by different names. Nyāya calls it *mithyā jñāna* (illusory knowledge). Sāṅkhya calls it lack of discrimination between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. Advaita calls it *māyā* (illusion). Self-realization is achieved either through self-culture, or as in some forms of Vedānta, through Lord's Grace.

Every system attempts to demarcate the Self from the not-Self. The Self is the supreme Reality. Hence, in India philosophy is called *adhyātma śāstra* or *ātma vidyā*. It is the science of the Self.

Philosophy in the West begins with the analysis of experience with the aid of reason. But the term experience is narrowed to the limits of sense experience. Indian philosophy takes the entire gamut of experience into account. It includes normal and super-

normal (*laukika* and *alaukika*), waking, dreaming and deep-sleep (*suṣupti*) experiences. Experience has two sides to it: the objective and the subjective. The systems of Indian philosophy are more interested in the subject. There are exceptions to this both in the West and the East.

In Indian philosophy the methods of perception and inference are made use of, but it is held that reason, by its very nature, cannot absolutely and completely comprehend Reality. Spiritual realization is a matter of experience. It is self-certifying and beyond reason. Experience is the ultimate authority. All others are valuable in the measure in which they lead to it. There is no demonstrative knowledge of Reality. The revelations that are set forth in the scriptures are *jnāpaka* (reminders) for us and not *kāraṇas* (makers) of our experience. The final acceptance is not based on a second-hand report, or on an inherited authority, but on direct experience. It is hardly fair to describe such a position as dogmatic. The student of philosophy has only fixed a limit for the working of reason. He has no distrust of reason, but he has assessed its limitations. Reason does not supply the premises for Indian philosophy. Revelation sets its working hypothesis, which is finally accepted after spiritual experience. Reason interprets, clarifies and works out the implications of the working hypothesis. The spiritual experience of the sages is the premise for reason to work on.

Though the omniscience of reason is not accepted, it is made use of at every stage in the interpretation of the scriptures. It is one of the most important determinative marks of purport in finding out the meaning of the scriptural statements. The Indian

philosophers' reliance on scripture is not authoritarian or dogmatic, as it seems at first sight. They only tell us that the philosophic ideal of *mokṣa* is beyond the purview of perception and inference. Sense perception and reasoning do not exhaust Reality—"our reach exceeds our grasp." Revelation is the means of communication to us only in spiritual matters, matters beyond the reach of common experience. Further, the findings of reason are inconclusive. Reason can be refuted by better Reason. Reason follows certain premises. Logic is called in India *ānvīkṣī*, i.e., "examination after." It is not an independent instrument of knowledge. Commenting on an important *sūtra*, Śaṅkara observes:—

"We see how arguments which some clever men have excogitated with great pains are shown by people still more ingenious to be fallacious, and how the arguments of the latter are again refuted in their turn by other men; so that on account of the diversity of men's opinions, it is impossible to accept mere reasoning as having a sure foundation."

Logic has the intrinsic defect that it can work only within the scheme of the network of relations. All our rational knowledge is relational. Spiritual experience of the Supreme Reality does not admit of divisions. *Relational* knowledge cannot give us immediate experience of the indivisible nature of Reality.

The validity of reason itself rests on something that cannot be demonstrated by reason. If it rests on some other reason, we shall have to go on from one truth to another, which lands us in an *infinite regress*. Such tests and criteria of truth as non-contradiction and coherence are not themselves obtained through reasoning. They are the presuppositions of



reason. Hence, reason is given a limited place in Indian philosophy.

Let us sum up the issue. Spiritual experience alone can demonstrate the nature of Reality and the truth of scriptural declarations. Reason adduces the probability. It cannot give us absolute proof. Not all scripture is accepted. Only that which has purport is accepted. Śaṅkara observes that "even if a thousand scriptural texts proclaim that fire is cold one is not bound to accept it." The Upaniṣads declare that there is no admittance into the shrine of philosophy for those who are intellectually indolent or cannot or will not think. The final position is: Scripture enunciates truths and philosophy seeks to establish them by arguments. Without the material supplied by scriptures and faith, logical reason will be mere speculation and fancy.

All the Indian philosophical systems exhibit a two-fold unity of outlook: "spiritual unity" the common philosophical ideal of *mokṣa*, which is a spiritual experience, not an intellectual apprehension or an occult vision or a physical ecstasy. The second is the moral unity. All the systems, though they give differing accounts of *moṣka*, are at one in holding that it cannot be attained by mere intellectual study. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* declares that "the Self cannot be attained by instruction or by intellectual power or even through much hearing" (*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā, na bahunā śrutena*). The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* reiterates the same verse. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* laments the futility of mere intellectual learning: "Brood not over the mass of words, for that is mere weariness of speech" (*nānudhyāyād bahūn śabdān, vāco viglāpanam hi tat*).

Intellectual study and reasoning must be accompanied by moral excellence and ethical virtues. There must be moral discipline before enlightenment. No spiritual realization is possible without a moral *sādhana* (discipline). The insistence on *sādhana* is common to all systems. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* is emphatic on the point: "Not he who has not desisted from evil ways, not he who is not tranquil, not he who is not concentrated in mind, not even he whose mind is not composed can reach the Self through right knowledge" (*nāvirato duṣcaritān-nāśānto nāsamāhith Nāśānta-mānaso vāpi prajñānenainam āpnuyāt*). The importance of the ethical life is insisted on in all the systems. The state of spiritual realization is not contra-ethical; it transcends the ethical. Śaṅkara has put among the four requisites for the study of the Vedānta, the acquisition of moral virtues. The other three are: discrimination of the Real from the unreal; non-attachment to the fruits of earth and heaven; and the desire for release. The scriptures cannot purify the man whose moral life is not clean. Some systems have insisted on a severe form of self-culture as the true preparation for spiritual realization. For example, Buddhism and Jainism appeal to no extraneous inducements or punishments, to no invocation to God. Referring to Buddhism, Whitehead observes that it is "the most colossal example of applied metaphysics." The Prābhākara school of Mīmāṃsā has elevated the moral good as an end in itself. The author of the great epic *Mahābhārata* concludes his grand work with this agonizing cry:

"I cry with arms uplifted, yet none heedeth. From righteousness flow forth pleasure and profit. Why then do ye not follow Dharma?"

Ignorant and ill-informed critics at home and abroad declare that in the Indian philosophical systems spiritual realization frees men from moral obligations. This is hardly true, if we take into account the lives and work of the *Jīvanmuktas* (those liberated while still in the body). Moral life implies a constraint in the unregenerate state of man's life. The agent is conscious of his obligations and fulfils them with difficulty. In the *Jīvanmuktas*, there is no strife and tension. In the words of Professor Hiriyanṇa, "they are not realizing virtue but revealing it." Their words are wisdom, and their work is consecration. It is only in this sense, that their acts are spontaneous, that they are said to be above the ethical sphere. Only in this restricted sense, is the remark true that Indian philosophy is beyond Logic and beyond Ethics. It certainly is not anti-rational or infra-ethics. Its close correlation of the moral and spiritual life has resulted in the unity of philosophy and religion in India.

The Indian philosophical systems insist on the necessity of getting spiritual instruction from a preceptor. All virile spiritual traditions have proclaimed the necessity of the *guru*. It is no formality or evasion of one's responsibility. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* declares, "He who has found a preceptor knows." An illumined teacher teaches a qualified aspirant the methods of realization. He does not broadcast the truth from housetops. He who wants gold must dig; the rest must be content with straw. The path is as sharp as a razor's edge. The aspirant must have a tranquil mind, utter detachment and a sharp intelligence.

The *sādhana*s outlined in the different systems are identical in many ways. The first stage is the life



of morality lived in a society, discharging all duties and refraining from wrong. The path of ceremonial purity cleanses the mind, without which *mokṣa* is impossible. In the words of William Blake, "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything will appear to man as it is infinite. For man has closed himself up till he sees all things through the narrow chinks of his cavern." The discharge of moral duties and the leading of a pure life prepares the aspirant's mind for the message from the illumined teacher. Receiving it is known as *śravaṇa*. Reflection upon it is called *manana*. It is the process of convincing oneself through reflection the truth learnt by *śravaṇa*. After *manana*, the aspirant begins to meditate on the truth in an uninterrupted manner till he has a direct experience of the truth. This is called *nididhyāsana*; it transforms mediate knowledge into immediate experience.

The Indian philosophical systems subscribe to a few other common doctrines which are integral to their thought. They are: the doctrine of Karma and rebirth; the eternal, non-created, pure nature of the Soul; the beginninglessness of the world; and its moral nature.

The doctrine of Karma brings out the faith in the eternal moral order of the universe. The universe is not a blind unconscious force, nor is it a chance world. It is a moral theatre for the art of soul making. We are what we have made ourselves. We suffer for what we have done. We reap what we sow. The fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves. No act is private and nothing is unimportant. Everything works out its destiny. The doctrine of Karma does not imply

that actions are uncaused. But they are determined by no external force. Karma is not caprice. It is being determined by one's own action. The doctrine of Karma and the outlook it has created in the minds of men have been responsible for the tolerant attitude of the Hindu view of life. Faith in the law of Karma, in the absolute justice of the rewards and punishments that fall to the lot of men, makes people bear their lot without bitterness and hatred.

Closely connected with the doctrine of Karma is the doctrine of rebirth. One short life is hardly sufficient for man's spiritual development. Many births are a spiritual necessity for the development of man. The doctrine assures us that the moral values and worth achieved in one life are not lost for ever. They are carried to other lives. The theory makes for the moral and spiritual continuity of man. Nothing good is lost; no moral effort is without its continued good effects.

Life in this world is regarded by all the systems as a preparation for the realization of *mokṣa*. "Saṁsāra is a succession of spiritual opportunities," says Dr. Radhakrishnan.

To awaken the spiritual in man and help him to realize it, and thus to humanize man, is the supreme objective of all institutions, social and religious. Ill-informed critics are of the opinion that Indian philosophy is ascetic and other-worldly. They declare that it is world-neglecting, static and life-destroying. This is an overdrawn and partial picture. Indian philosophy is dynamic, pragmatic and is inspired by spiritual vision. It has taken note of the natural motives, instincts and passions of man and has regulated them.

It aims at evolving a civilization which is naturally productive, socially just, æsthetically beautiful and spiritually integral. "It is not a country without a capital, nor is it a formless lump of creeds with no central doctrines to hold it. It is a citadel with a ring of outworks, intricate but interrelated." The outworks are being added to from time to time.



## Chapter IV

### APPROACH TO VEDĀNTA

The dominant note that characterizes Indian culture and thought is its passion for religion<sup>1</sup> and philosophy. We should look for India's best contribution to world's thought in its religion and philosophy. Indian philosophy is not any and every kind of approach to the study of Reality. It is the acceptance of tested knowledge and examined beliefs in the light of not only the intellect but also integral experience, resulting in an enlightenment which puts an end to all sorrows and brings in abiding bliss. All the systems of Indian philosophy aim at the spiritual realization of the soul which secures it bliss.<sup>2</sup>

Some modern critics look upon the systems of Indian philosophy, as not warring with one another, but as constituting a whole, where each system supplements the other and all find their consummate fulfilment in Vedānta.

Vedānta is regarded as the perfect system of the Hindus. Hinduism is the popular name for the religion of Vedānta. It stands out as the most significantly 'clear native Philosophy of India.' It is the most impressive attempt at system building made in India. It answers at once to the strict demands of metaphysics and the deep requirements of a sound religion that does not surrender the claims of reason

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1. Louis Renou writes: 'Religion is not an independent phenomenon in India. Religion is not conceived as a duty, or a problem facing every human being on reaching maturity. It is a heritage and a tradition. It is not an obsession of the human mind as it is constantly asserted.' (*Religions of Ancient India*, p. 48).

2. With the single exception of the Cārvāka school.

or the needs of humanity. Vedānta in one form or another has become a contemporary spiritual force working for the good of humanity. It has attracted the great intellectuals of our age to its fold. Its influence on world's thought, particularly that of the West, is deep and widespread. Vedānta has influenced the personalities of Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Nietzsche and Keyserling in Europe. Its influence on the Irish renaissance is seen through the personalities of W. B. Yeats and G. W. Russell. Its great influence on American thought is most vigorous and is best illustrated in the works of Emerson, Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, Christopher Isherwood and Somerset Maugham.

Romain Rolland declared: "The only religion that can have any hold on the intellectual people is the rationalistic religion of Advaita Vedānta." Vedānta and its fundamental ideas pervade the whole of Indian literature.

There is a popular Sanskrit couplet<sup>3</sup> that states, 'Like jackals in a wood, the various systems of philosophy will howl, so long as the lion of Vedānta, with mane ruffled, does not roar.' The words of Aldous Huxley about *Gītā* describe the philosophy of Vedānta best: Vedānta is "one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the Perennial philosophy ever to have been made. Hence, its enduring value, [is] not only for Indians, but for all mankind."

The system of Vedānta is twofold: Absolutistic and Theistic. The former is represented by Śankara's Advaita and the latter by Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita.

All of them build their systems on the authority

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3. 'Tāvad garjanti śāstrāṇi jāmbukā vipine yathā,  
Na garjati jaṭākṣepād yāvad vedānta-kesarī.'

of the Scriptures. Scripture is the source for the fundamental tenets of Vedānta. The Vedas are regarded as eternal (*nitya*) and not as the composition of any human being. They are the transcript and record of the revelations vouchsafed to the seers and sages of India. The Ṛṣis are the media of the revelation, at the beginning of each aeon. Each Veda is divided into four sections called Mantras, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads. There are four Vedas called *Rg*, *Yajur*, *Sāma*, and *Atharva*.

The Mantras are hymns addressed to the various deities like Indra, Varuṇa, Agni. They exhibit great poetic qualities. They are the earliest poetry of the human mind. The Ṛṣis of the Vedas are said to perceive the Mantras.<sup>4</sup> In the words of Tagore, the Vedic Mantras are the

poetic testament of a people's collective reaction to the wonder and awe of existence. A people of vigorous and unsophisticated imagination awakened at the very dawn of civilization to a sense of the inexhaustible mystery that is implicit in life. It was a simple faith of theirs that attributed divinity to every element and force of Nature, but it was a brave and joyous one, in which fear of the gods was balanced by trust in them, in which the sense of mystery only gave enchantment to life, without weighing it down with bafflement.<sup>5</sup>

The Brāhmaṇas lay down the rules and directions concerning the performance of the various sacrifices. They are prose passages. They do not have any philosophical thought worth the name. The Āraṇyakas mark the transition from the Brāhmaṇas to the Upaniṣads. They are composed in quiet forest hermitages, hence the name Āraṇyakas. They give us allegorical and mystic interpretation of some of the sacrifices.

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4. 'Rṣayo mantra-draṣṭārah.'

5. *Hindu Scriptures*, ed. by Nicol Macnicol. Foreword by Rabindranath Tagore.



Certain forms of meditation are also suggested. The concluding portions of the Vedas are called the Upaniṣads. They are described as Vedānta for two reasons: they are the concluding portions of the Vedas and are also the quintessence of the Philosophy of the Vedas.

Every system of Vedānta declares that it derives its doctrines from three texts (*Prasthāna-traya*), namely, the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the *Vedānta-Sūtras*. Each school holds that its interpretation of the texts is the only correct version and those of the others wrong. Thus we have the different systems of Vedānta being fastened on to one and the same text. This has been possible because of the presence of more than one way of looking at the texts. There is an inherent ambiguity in all these texts. They all do not speak with one voice. The text for Vedānta is the Upaniṣads. The other two though authoritative, are based on the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads are the *Śruti*, i.e., revelation, while the *Gītā* and the *Vedānta-Sūtras* are *Smṛtis*, i.e. human compositions embodying the meaning of the *Śrutis*.

Let us advert to the consideration of the Upaniṣads. The term Upaniṣad has been interpreted in different ways.<sup>6</sup> The etymological meaning of the word is to sit 'close by devotedly' (*śad-upa-ni*). It also means secret knowledge (*guhya ādeśaḥ*). It is applied to the key passages of the Upaniṣads. Śaṅkara interprets the term to mean that which destroys ignorance and leads to Brahman. There is a large number of treatises that go by the name of the Upaniṣads. Only some twelve are interpreted by the Vedāntins. They

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6. The root *sad* yields three senses according to Sureśvara—to decay, to go or to know.

are ascribed to an age earlier than that of Gautama the Buddha.<sup>7</sup>

The American savant Thoreau exhorted his countrymen not to read the *New York Times*, but to read the *Eternities*, meaning the Upaniṣads. The Spanish writer J. Mascaro described the Upaniṣads as the 'Himalayas of the Soul'.<sup>8</sup> Just as that great mountain height determines the climate, the rainfall and the physical features of the peninsula, so do these heights of light and wisdom determine the scope and the quality of the spiritual life of the race that inhabits it. In point of popularity the Upaniṣads are second only to the great charter of Hinduism, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

Schopenhauer, after reading them exclaimed: "And oh, how thoroughly is the mind here washed clean of all early engrafted Jewish superstitions. . . .! In the whole world there is no study. . . so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upaniṣads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death!" Max Müller, who has translated the Upaniṣads, describes them as "the light of the morning, like the pure air of the mountains, so simple and so true if once understood."

All the Upaniṣads are not alike. They differ in their length and methods of exposition. Some are only a few verses and others are very long. Some are in verse and some in prose. Yet others combine both. In their style and manner they vary widely; sometimes, we have simple concrete narrative, sometimes

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7. Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan's article on Upanishads. *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*. Pp. 55-75. Edited by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and others.

8. *Himalaya of the Soul* by J. Mascaro. The Wisdom of the East series. Edited by L. Cranmer-Byng and Allan W. Watts.

abstract metaphysical speculation, and at other times argumentative dialogue. The tone also fluctuates. There is in some passages high seriousness, and in others homely humour, and in yet others, innumerable analogies.<sup>9</sup>

The philosophy of the Upaniṣads is the philosophy of the two Vedāntas. Each school, the Monistic and the Theistic, claims that it solely and completely represents the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. It is very difficult to adjudge whether the Upaniṣads are completely after the heart of Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja. The Upaniṣads are the records of the intuitions of the great seers. They have reported their vision and experiences. They have not built systems of thought. They are not the works of a single author. They are the reports of the first-hand mystic experience of the sages and not a dialectical and metaphysical discussion about Reality. They are "more poetic than philosophical." They take the forms of informal discussions, parables, and intimate dialogues. In the words of Śrī Aurobindo,

The Ṛṣis disclose what they have seen, they do not argue. The dialogue is often between a qualified aspirant and a sage. It is not a free broadcasting of truth. The Ṛṣis imparted the truth to aspirants only after testing the sincerity and strength of the student's mind.

Heraclitus is reported to have said, "If men care for gold they must dig for it; otherwise they must be content with straw."

The Upaniṣads, like all great classics, have the power of self-renewal. They are neither old nor new. They are eternal. They are ageless. They are modern

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9. See *Breath of the Eternal* (an anthology of the Upaniṣads) by Swami Prabhavananda and Frederic Manchester (Published by Vedanta Society of Southern California, U.S.A.)



and topical in a sense. They have a message for all ages and specially for our own. "Modernity is not a question of date but of outlook". When we read and ponder over the passages in the Upaniṣads they re-emerge in answer to our present problems. They have the power to produce from age to age the necessary corrective to men's sense of values and conduct of life, by creating the spiritual ideal which gives them the vision of Truth.

The two schools of Vedānta claim that their philosophy is the same as that of the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā*, and the *Vedānta-Sūtras*. They do not agree with the modern scholars who hold the opinion that it is foolish metaphysical ambition to read one rigorous system of thought in this book of ancient wisdom. The orthodox Vedāntin regards that a single system of thought is developed in all the three texts; hence, they have commented on all the three texts and derived their doctrines from them.<sup>10</sup>

The other two texts which are the source books and authorities for Vedānta are the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the *Vedānta-Sūtras*. These two are human compositions. They derive their authority from their theme. Śaṅkara treats the *Gītā* as one of the triple texts because the Lord Himself has delivered the message. The *Gītā* is the most popular Hindu scripture.

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10. Max Müller writes: 'With us philosophy always means something systematic, while what we find here are philosophic rhapsodies rather than consecutive treatises. But that is the very reason why the Upaniṣads are so interesting to the historical student. Nowhere, except in India, can we watch that period of chaotic thought, half poetical, half religious, which preceded, in India at least, the age of philosophy properly so called....And however unsystematic these relics of the childhood of philosophy may seem, there is really more system in them than appears at first sight.'

It is enshrined in the *Mahābhārata* and is admired by all as the layman's Upaniṣad. Here too, both the schools of Vedānta claim that it embodies their philosophy of life and not their rival's. Though a completely objective approach is not possible, still one feels, taking the verses of the *Gītā* by and large, that it is more akin to theistic Vedānta than the absolutism of Śaṅkara. There is very little direct and apparent support for Śaṅkara's doctrines in the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* speaks in one voice unlike the Upaniṣads. It is predominantly theistic. It is the treasure-house for the method of devotion.

The philosophy of the *Gītā* is the philosophy of the theistic Vedānta. Its general importance is very great. It affirms the reality and validity of religious experience and man's imperative need for it. It presents unambiguously a complete and comprehensive ideal of true religion. It outlines a religion based on the philosophy of action. It declares that religion has no secrets which absolve us from right living. It asks each of us to take up the duty that is dictated by our *svabhāva* (talents) and *svadharma* (individual's norm of life). It does not force all men into one path or one vocation. Each grows to his best in his own way. All paths lead to God. There are not only many mansions in the Lord's Home, but there are many paths to it. The Lord of the *Gītā* pleads for the unity of religions and the Fellowship of Faiths. Every faith is a path to god.<sup>11</sup> Tolerance is the chief article of the religion of the *Gītā*. It holds that the renuncia-

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11. "Some run swiftly, some walk, some creep painfully, but everyone will reach the goal who keep on. Some seek a Father in Heaven above. Some ask for a Human image to adore. Some crave a Spirit vast as life and love. Within Thy mansions we have all and more." ●

tion of action is wrong. There is no freedom from action, but there is "only freedom in action."

The supreme secret of the *Gītā* is the path of devotion and surrender. The ideal man of the *Gītā* is called the Karma-Yogin. The dialogue form, the dramatic context, the charming personages, the universality of the message of the discourse and the resplendent demonstration of the *Viśvarūpa* to Arjuna, 'the close companion, the chosen instrument and the representative man' have all made the *Gītā* a world scripture.

The *Gītā* has attracted the attention of all the modern savants. Gandhiji, Dr. Tagore, Tilak, Sri Aurobindo and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, have all found their inspiration in the *Gītā* and have written about it. The *Gītā* is the first Sanskrit work to be translated into English (1785). 7266

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's estimate of the *Gītā* sums up the nature and content of the scripture.

It sets forth a tradition which has emerged from the religious life of mankind. It is articulated by a profound seer who sees truth in its many-sidedness and believes in its saving power. It represents not any sect of Hinduism but Hinduism as a whole, not merely Hinduism but religion as such in its universality without limit of time and space, embracing within its synthesis the whole gamut of the human spirit from the crude fetishism of the savage to the creative affirmation of the saint.<sup>12</sup>

Both the schools of Vedānta cite the verses of the *Gītā* in their support. It is not difficult to see a certain unity of outlook in the *Gītā*. Even that is not agreed to by many. The *Gītā* has proved a source of comfort for millions of men throughout the centuries in their lives. It has been the most powerful shaping factor in the renewal of the spiritual life of man. It is

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12. Dr. Radhakrishnan's *Bhagavad-Gītā*. See Introduction.

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regarded on all hands as the best guide in life.

The status accorded to the *Gītā* as one of the triple texts on which Vedānta is based is not as fundamental as that of the Upaniṣads. Vedānta recognizes two types of scriptures—*Śruti* (the Upaniṣads) and *Smṛtis*. The *Smṛtis* lay down the laws of conduct in the light of the Vedas and guide individuals and communities in their daily life and apply the eternal truths of the Vedas to the changing conditions of our life. Their authority is derived from the Vedas. There are several such *Smṛtis*, e.g., that of Manu, Yājñavalkya, and Parāśara. The *Mahābhārata* is one such great *Smṛti* and the *Gītā* is a part of it. The *Gītā* is given a special place because it is the directly delivered message of the Lord.

As for the *Smṛtis*, they are acceptable when they are in agreement with the *Śruti*, and are to be set aside when they contradict the *Śruti*. They have only a derivative validity.<sup>13</sup>

The third important foundation of Vedānta is the *Vedānta Sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa. It is variously called *Brahma-Sūtras* because its subject matter is Brahman, *Uttara-mīmāṃsā-Sūtras*, *Vyāsa Sūtras*, and *Śārīraka Sūtras*. The *Sūtras* aim at a systematic working out of the teaching of the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads speak in different voices in different contexts. The *Sūtras* reconcile the apparent contradictions and set them in order. The various passages in the Upaniṣads are arranged under different topics (*adhikaraṇas*). The *Sūtras* aim at definiteness and coherence and seek to demonstrate that the teaching of the Upaniṣads forms a consistent whole, free from all contradictions.

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13. For a clear and full discussion of the topic see Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtras*, II. i. 1.

The *Sūtra* form is not self-evident. In the words of Thibaut, there is scarcely one single *Sūtra* intelligible without a commentary. The *Sūtras* are often concise to excess. They retain what is essential in a given phrase. They do not include all those aspects that can be supplied, with some strain, by the reflection and the memory of the reader. They rigidly exclude all words that can possibly be spared and they avoid all unnecessary repetition. They are like algebraic equations which we have to expand when we are to understand their implications.<sup>14</sup>

The exact number of the *Sūtras* is 535 according to Śaṅkara and 564 according to Madhva. The ācāryas of Vedānta have all commented on the *Sūtras*. We have the commentaries from Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Nimbārka. The two schools of Vedānta are represented by the commentaries of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. Śaṅkara's commentary ranks as a great philosophical classic and as a work of great literature. He belongs to the group of the great philosophical prose-writers, Śabara, Vācaspati, and the author of the *Mahābhāṣya*. Each of the schools of Vedānta claims that its system alone is in complete accord with the *Vedānta-Sūtras*. Critical scholars like Thibaut opine that the Upaniṣads are after the heart of Śaṅkara and the *Sūtras* after the heart of Rāmānuja. The avowed function of the *Sūtras* is to synthesize the Upaniṣads.

The reliance of Vedānta on the authority of scriptures (Upaniṣads, *Gītā*, and *Vedānta-Sūtras*) has been a target of attack for critics at home and abroad. Certain European critics and their friends in India

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14. 'Svalpākṣaram-asandigdham sāravat viśvatomukham,  
Astobham-anavadyaṅca sūtram sūtravido viduḥ.'

have regarded the Vedānta as religion and not as philosophy. Philosophy, according to the Western conception, is the pure intellectual interpretation of Reality. It is based on logic and inference. Reason is its guide and not revelation. In this sense, they assert that Indian philosophy is not pure philosophy. There is no pure logical approach to Truth, as in science or philosophy. Things are taken on faith and trust and no proof is asked for them. The most ardent belief of the Vedāntin is his faith in the infallibility and inerrancy of the Vedas. Hence, it is declared to be *unscientific, irrational* and *dogmatic*. The close association of religion and philosophy in India is held up for ridicule.

Further, some hold that Vedānta believes in a faculty called intuition. The intuition of the seers is dubbed as unreasoned. They say it is found in the depths of silence with a capital 'S'. Indian philosophy is said to work in the twilight zone of experience. Uninformed and unsympathetic critics regard Indian philosophy as a hotchpotch of "lofty ethics, low customs, subtle wisdom, superstitious ideas, profound thought, and priestly barbarism." The criticism boils down to the point that the supreme authority claimed for scripture by Vedānta makes it unphilosophical, authoritarian and dogmatic. The criticism derives support from the Western conception of the term Philosophy.

The term Philosophy in the West has acquired a restricted sense. It is an intellectual interpretation of Reality. It makes use of reason and perception, i.e., sense knowledge. Reliance on intuition is considered as taking away the scientific value of philosophy. Intuition and scriptural authority do not brooke the



spotlight of reason. They are not germane to facts. They work, not in the region of the clear light of reason, but in the twilight zone of experience.

The primacy of the intellect or 'critical intelligence,' in the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, is the characteristic of the Western systems of philosophy. There is close and rational alliance between science and philosophy in the West. Philosophy strives to become more and more scientific by adopting mathematical methods. Philosophy in the West is speculative. Reason is accorded the first place for the understanding of Reality. Socrates urged the need for concepts and definitions and equated virtue with knowledge. Plato admitted none in his academy who had not a course and was not efficient in Geometry and Numbers. Socrates defined man as a 'rational animal', Plato as a 'social animal' and Aristotle as a 'political animal'. It did not occur to any of them to define man as a spiritual being. The philosophy of the Middle Ages is one long chain of the development of the Christian dogmas. Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, declared, 'that which is clear and distinct is true'. His successor Spinoza sets forth his Ethics in geometrical fashion. He declared that "Truth will be eternally hidden from the human race, had not Mathematics, which deals not with ends, but with the nature and properties of figures, shown to man another form of Truth." Leibnitz outlined his philosophy on the basis of symbolic logic and infinitesimal calculus. He declared that Mathematics is our guide; "If we had it, we should be able to reason in metaphysics and morals in much the same way as in geometry and analysis. If controversies were to arise, there should be no more need for disputation

between two philosophers than between two accountants. For, it would suffice to take their pencils in their hands, to sit down to their slates, and to say to each other (with a friend as witness if they liked) 'Let us calculate'."

Kant effected the Copernican revolution in philosophy by declaring that it is impossible to have a science of metaphysics. Metaphysics as a natural disposition is possible and not as a science. Hegel identified the real with the rational.

We find that the logical consequence of interpreting philosophy in terms of pure reason has landed the West in Logical positivism. The Logical positivists declare that they are taking one step ahead of Kant. Kant declared the impossibility of metaphysics as a science. The positivists say that if metaphysics is not verifiable, it is nonsensical. They regard all the philosophical problems and propositions of traditional metaphysics and speculative philosophy as either tautologous or nonsensical. Wittgenstein, the prophet of the school, writes that "the right method of philosophy be this, to say nothing except what can be said in terms of the propositions of natural science, i.e., something which has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always when some one wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions." Analysis, we are told, is the chief method and creed of this school. Propositions are analysed by them into two classes, the *analytic* and the *negative* and the negative again into the *empirical* and the *logical*. Such an analysis perforce excludes all value-judgments and does not commit us to any transcendental or metaphysical views or even mean-

ingful ideas. The logical positivists hold the view that metaphysical terms like God, soul, immortality are unverifiable. Sensory verification is their great principle. They confine meaningful assertions only to matters of empirical fact which can be submitted to sensory verification. They hold ethical statements as ejaculations of emotion. They declare that the acceptance of metaphysical categories and a deep analysis of them brings one up against logic, language and Truth which are pretty serious things to find oneself against.

The West in their anxiety to emancipate themselves from the apron-strings of theology and religion, have only succeeded in hanging on to the coat-tails of science and logic. It has resulted in the new slavery to science and semantics.

The Vedānta, like all other systems of Indian thought, interprets the term philosophy in its plenary sense and not as mere rational knowledge. This fact arises from several reasons and a proper understanding of all the arguments is absolutely necessary for an appraisal of Vedānta as philosophy. Indian philosophy, and Vedānta in particular, feels that the knowledge of ultimate Reality cannot be had by the exclusive use of Reason. The Vedāntins have submitted the faculty of Reason to a thorough and critical examination in order to know its powers and limitations.

Reason is one of the recognized instruments of philosophy. Vedānta holds that reason cannot work in a vacuum. It is a mere instrument which cannot by itself lead us to any truth. It elaborates, explains and systematizes the basic spiritual experiences of the Upaniṣadic seers. We affirm and discover the Supreme Reality by immediate, direct spiritual experience and interpret it in terms of logic. When logic goes against



the deliverances of the spiritual intuitions of the seers, it is set aside. Śaṅkara, in his commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtras* observes:

In matters to be known from *Śruti*, mere reasoning is not to be relied on. As the thoughts of man are altogether unfettered, reasoning which disregards the holy texts and rests on individual opinion only, has no proper foundation. One sees how arguments which some clever men had excogitated with great pains, are shown by people still more ingenious to be fallacious, and how the arguments of the latter are refuted in their turn by other men; so it is impossible to accept mere reasoning as having a sure foundation. Nor can we get over this difficulty by accepting as well founded the reasoning of some person of recognized eminence, whether Kapila or any one else, since we observe that even men of the most undoubted intellectual eminence, such as Kapila, Kaṇāda, and other founders of philosophical schools have contradicted each other.

Scripture being self-valid does not need any proof. Its authority needs no support from anywhere. It is the direct evidence of Truth, just as the light of the sun is its own evidence and at the same time the direct means of our knowledge of form and colour. The authority of the Scripture is not invoked in all matters. What can be known by perception and inference is not to be learnt from Scripture. It is authoritative in respect of those facts that cannot be known by other *Pramāṇas*.<sup>15</sup> Its authoritativeness, when it contradicts the experience of the sense knowledge, is not valid. A hundred scriptural texts declaring fire to be cold or non-luminous are not valid.

Spiritual realisation, which is the goal of Vedānta, is an immediate experience carrying its own validity with it. It is not a relational or mediate knowledge involving the subject-object relation. The faculty of reason works only when premises are there. The sub-

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15. 'Aprāpte sāstram-arthavat.'

ject matter for reason comes only from experience. Western philosophers employ reason to synthesize sense-experience. They restrict the term experience to the world disclosed by the senses only and leave out all other forms of human experience. They confine their attention to the world of objects. They leave out the experience of the subject. Vedānta takes the entire experience of man into account. It includes not only his waking experience but also his dream and sleep experiences. The entire inward experience of the subject is given prominence in Vedānta. It is 'Ātman-centric' in the words of Dr. P. T. Raju. Vedānta gives a synthetic view of all experience.

To regard the senses and reason as the only sources of knowledge is to restrict the significance of the term Reality. These two faculties tell us very little about Reality. The knowledge they give us is mediate and relational. The mere fact that the human mind is not aware of what is beyond the senses is not the same as saying that there is nothing beyond the senses. The Vedāntin agrees with the poet Browning when he says our reach should exceed our grasp. We have an earnest intimation of the transcendental spirit. We are half conscious of it. The Vedāntin does not, like the agnostic, declare that the transcendent is unknowable. He accepts the need for a separate means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) for the realization of the extra-empirical. This is his justification for the authority of Scripture. The knowledge which we get from reason is not free from defects. It cannot give us immediate and certain knowledge. All relational way of knowing, in the last resort, is involved in contradictions. Hence, the need to accept scriptural authority in respect of the Supreme. The Vedāntin posits the exist-

ence of the Supreme as a working hypothesis on the authority of the Scripture. The postulation is an act of faith. Aldous Huxley sums up the issue in his saying, "Faith is a pre-condition of all systematic knowing, all purposive doing and all decent living." Referring to the need for a way of knowing higher and other than the intellect, A. E. Taylor writes,

It seems indeed as if the function of mere intellect were only that of a necessary and valuable intermediary between a lower and a higher level of immediate apprehension. It breaks up the original union of the *what* and the *that* of simple feeling, and proceeds to make the *what*, which it deals with in its isolation, ever more and more complex. But the ultimate issue of the process is only reached and its ultimate aim only satisfied so far as it conducts us at a higher stage of mental development to the direct intuition of a richer and more comprehensive whole in the immediate unity of the *that* and the *what*.

In the last analysis, it is the first-hand immediate self-certifying spiritual experience, that is the proof positive for the existence of the Spirit. The Vedāntic sages affirm what they accept as a working hypothesis on the authority of Scripture, by their own spiritual experience. *Experience is the ultimate test for the existence of the Spirit. Such an attitude can hardly be called dogmatic and unscientific.* The Vedic sages talk of their experience of Reality 'I have heard', 'I have seen', 'I have enjoyed', 'I have drunk'. They do not speak from second-hand knowledge. They speak from direct experience. There is a striking unanimity in the experience of the spiritual seers of different ages and different climes. They shake hands with one another and proclaim the unity of all religions and the Fellowship of Faiths. The philosophical system built on the experience of the mystics is called Perennial Philosophy or Eternal Gospel.



The Vedānta is not dogmatic in any sense of the term, for it bases its ultimate faith on experience and not hearsay. Its acceptance of the authority of Scripture is *unphilosophical* only on the surface. Scripture is a collection of words. It has to be interpreted, if we are to understand its meaning. Śaṅkara, the representative of Advaita Vedānta, does not accept all the Vedas as authoritative. Only the purportful Scripture is authoritative.

The purport of the Scripture is determined by six determinative marks of purport called *tātparyā lingas*. They are the harmony of the initial and concluding passages (*upakrama* and *upasamhāra*), repetition (*abhyāsa*), novelty (*apūrvatā*), fruitfulness (*phala*), glorification by eulogistic or condemnatory passages (*arthavāda*) and intelligibility in the light of reasoning (*upapatti*).

Though reason (*upapatti*) is only one of the determinative marks of purport, on close examination we find that it is all in all. In fact, reason steps in at every stage. It is reason that has to decide which passage is the initial one and which the concluding one. It is again reason that points out which repetition is purportful and which is not. The really novel message has to be ascertained by reason.

The Vedānta does not minimize the importance of logic. Like all the other systems of Indian philosophy it makes epistemology the portal to metaphysics. In the words of Max Müller, "Almost the first question which every one of the Hindu systems of philosophy tries to settle is, How do we know? They give *noetics* the first place. No object of knowledge can be established or known without the help of *pramāṇa*. The dictum of the *Mīmāṃsā* is '*mānādhīnam-meyasiddhiḥ*'.

The Vedāntin does not belittle the power of reason. He expects the student to be critical and not the dupe of appearances. He must have a discerning intellect and an inquiring frame of mind. The Upaniṣads declare that there is no admittance to the fold of Vedānta 'for those that are intellectually indolent, and cannot or would not think.'

The student of Vedānta is asked to examine and to think out the pros and cons of the message he receives from his Guru. He is not to accept blindly whatever his teacher teaches. It is neither blind faith nor blank acceptance. *Manana* or reflection has an important place in the Vedāntin's discipline. The discipline is partly moral and partly intellectual. Reason is acclaimed as the charioteer. Inquiry or *jijñāsa* is enjoined on the aspirant. *Jijñāsa* is research, in the words of Deussen. Philosophical inquiry is made the necessary preliminary for spiritual realization. All these point to the fact that logic was not discarded by Vedānta.

The system adheres to the strict rules of logic. The arguments are developed with perfect freedom, freshness and down-rightness. They follow logic rigorously without ever looking right or left. There is no trace of intellectual cowardice in the system. They show a strong and simple desire to abide within the strict limits of knowledge. The doctrines are elaborated with perfect freedom and ruthlessness. It is sheer ignorance to hold that Vedānta is positive throughout and is not argumentative, that it asserts and does not prove.

A glance at the methods of Vedānta and the nature of the logical discussion carried on in the commentaries reveal the place of reason in Vedānta. Max

Müller remarks that "the teachers of Vedānta are working out mighty philosophical problems with unfaltering love of Truth, and in an unimpassioned and truly philosophical spirit."

The method, in the hands of Śaṅkara, affects one almost as a great physical act of courage. The boldness is astounding, as the sonorous prose in which it is set is fascinating. In the words of Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "If one has a taste for grandeur, if one relishes, for example, the poetry of Lucretius with its 'flaming walls of the universe,' one cannot be unmoved by the sonorous prose of Śaṅkara where these flaming walls tumble down."

The method adopted by Vedānta passes through three steps. First of all we get a presentation of the *prima facie* views. The Vedāntin states in full the tenets of other rival schools. They state first that system which is remotest from Vedānta. Then follows a serious criticism of the other systems from the logical and scriptural standpoints. The rival systems are convicted of contradiction and inconsistency. The criticism of other views is called *khaṇḍana*. Lastly, there is the establishment of the final position as reasoned out doctrine. This is called *siddhānta*. In all this, Vedānta makes use of logical reasoning. Non-contradiction is the test of Truth, as unsublatability (*abādha*) the mark of Reality. The legitimate claims of reason are recognized by Vedānta. Vedānta is more than rational thought and not less than it. Spiritual intuition is neither infra-intellectual nor contra-intellectual. It rises above the intellect. "The death of the intellect is not a necessary condition for the life of the Spirit." Dr. S. Radhakrishnan observes, "Wisdom pure and transcendent is different from scientific know-



ledge but not discontinuous with it." The dialectical method of Vedānta compels it to deal with the tenets of all other schools; this makes it a compendium of the entire range of Indian philosophy.

Śaṅkara's method in Advaita Vedānta is unique. It is critical and dialectical. It passes in review the positions taken up by other systems of philosophy and criticizes them in turn, one after another. In this process of criticism the Advaita Vedānta never fails to note the varying fulness, the philosophical worth and the logical acumen of other systems. The lower category is criticized in the light of the higher in which it finds its fulfilment. In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "In Vedānta, as in the Upaniṣads, there is progressive discovery of truth."

To sum up, the Vedāntin's insistence that the final testimony of Truth is first-hand spiritual experience makes it scientific. Others may teach us the truth, which they have reached, as well as the method by which they have done so, but unless we by ourselves get at those experiences, we cannot call it our own. The Upaniṣads declare that we should see the Spirit. It is variously described as *anubhava*, *darśana*, *brahma-sparśa*. Philosophy is not the mere discovery of Truth but its realization. Along with this insistence on spiritual experience there is the recognition of the function and the legitimate use of logic, which makes Vedānta acceptable to the contemporary votaries of science and reason. Hence, the charge against Vedānta, that it is unscientific and purely based on faith, is not true.

The distinguishing characteristic of Vedānta is its close association with philosophy and religion. The close alliance of the two in Vedānta and in other

systems is a dominant feature of Indian philosophy. The basic motive for philosophy, according to Vedānta, is to put an end to all the sorrows of human life and attain a state of existence called *mokṣa*. In *mokṣa* the individual has all his doubts and disbeliefs dispelled and all his strife and tension overcome. It is looked upon as the state of perfect bliss. The destiny of man is to attain *mokṣa*. In *mokṣa* he grows to his best and realizes his true nature. All arts and sciences should subserve the individual's aspiration for *mokṣa*. There is no such cry in Vedānta as 'art for art's sake'. Everything is for *mokṣa*'s sake. Vedānta originates in man's search for the highest good which will radically terminate all the suffering and limitations of human life. This practical motive is throughout present in all the systems of Indian philosophy. This basic practical motive has at times overshadowed the logical subtlety, depth and skill, the powers of analysis, the force of argument, the dialectical acumen, and the play of reason found in the Indian systems of philosophy which regales and baffles many an ardent lover of pure thought.

The motive force in Vedānta is not speculative as in the West. In the words of Bradley, "Philosophy seeks to gain possession of Reality only in an ideal form." The mission of the philosopher, Mackenzie adds, terminates in the quest, rather than in any actions that may follow from it. Curiosity, intellectual restlessness, and the passion for finding Truth in terms of logic have spurred on Western thinkers to construct philosophical systems. The ideal philosopher is described by Collingwood in his autobiography. He writes that

the Oxford Philosophers have excogitated a philosophy, so pure from the sordid taint of utility that they could lay their hands on their hearts and say it was of no use at all; a philosophy so scientific that no one whose life was not a life of pure research could appreciate it; and so abstruse that only a whole-time student, and a clever man at that, could understand it. They were resigned to the contempt of fools and amateurs.

This brings out the intellectual and speculative nature of Western philosophy. Vedānta takes a different view of philosophy. It does not stop at the discovery of Truth but utilizes it for removing all the sorrows of life. Philosophy seeks *mokṣa*. It is a peace that passeth all understanding.

Reflective thinking and an analysis of human experience have convinced the Vedāntin of the presence of evil in life. Life is found to be full of sorrows and has no permanent value. The evils of the world are classified under three distinct heads. They are the (1) intra-organic, i.e., arising from psycho-physical causes like bodily and mental suffering, i.e., *ādhyātmika*; (2) troubles and evils arising from extra-organic cases such as from men, beasts, and birds, i.e., *ādhibhautika*; (3) evils arising from supernatural influences like spirits, ghosts, demons, elements, and planets, i.e., *ādhidaiṇavika*. The radical termination of all these miseries is the function and purpose of philosophy according to Vedānta. Philosophy for the Vedāntin is not the luxury of the learned few, 'a parenthesis in the life of men, a tempting and fruitless exercise of the mind, a flight from the objects of immediate living'. It has an important part to play helping man to realize his destiny.

Philosophy is what matters most. It is not the mere advancement of knowledge. It is not an arm-chair study arising out of the instinct of wonder or



curiosity. It is not the exhibition of dialectical skill or logical acumen. It does not merely seek intellectual clarity or mental perspicacity. It is an intense and an inner quest for the spiritual experience that terminates all ills and gives us permanent bliss. It arises out of the full awareness of the ills, weariness, and the limitations of the world that makes the Vedāntin seek *mokṣa*. It destroys the radical unrest of life and its process. It begins in the perception of sorrows. There is the unmistakable initial pessimism staring us in the face, analysis and reflection lay them bare to us. Most of the pleasures of human life are impermanent, and at every stage of our association with them, there is sorrow attached to them. In the pursuit of the things of the world like wealth, fame, we become the inevitable prey of passions which distract and disturb us. It produces tension and strife in us and makes us restless. When we pursue the objects of the world we expose ourselves to the strife and jealousy of men from whom we wrest the objects. After getting the objects of our ambition we are tortured by the fear and anxiety of their possible loss. Finally, we land ourselves in sorrow when we lose the objects.

Further, a psychological examination of the pleasures and passions of life reveal that a complete indulgence in them leads to sorrow. The normal appetites of men grow with what they feed on. Once we take to the indulgence of pleasures, we secure the ends we seek, provided our sense organs, which are the instruments of the pleasure, are in sound condition. With their decay the pleasures cannot be enjoyed. The way of indulgence, wears away the vigour of sense organs. Even the pleasure derived from the sense organs do not always afford us the same satisfaction.

What gave success and satisfaction in the case of one person, at one time, may not do so to another, or even to the same person, at other times. Further, there is the economic Law of diminishing returns operating in the field of pleasures also. There is a peculiar law associated with the indulgence of pleasures. Men take to certain pleasures with the hope of satisfying their cravings. With every satisfaction the want increases and in course of time becomes a tyrant passion and also an obsessive craving. The craving gives you discomfort. Thus we see that the law of pleasures is self-defeating. This psychological law is not only true of minor passions but it is true also of major human passions like ambition and vanity. A life of fulfilled ambitions goads us on to fresh adventures and their fulfilment still leaves the question, "What if one has all this?"

Lowes Dickinson points out that "too few of us surely attain the good even of which we are capable, too many are capable of too little; and all are capable for a short time." Sage Patañjali in a significant aphorism sums up the Indian philosophical attitude when he says, "To the enlightened all is misery." They cry with Hamlet, "How weary, stale and unprofitable are the uses of the world!"

The Vedāntin admits the existence of sorrow and does not despair. He finds that philosophy, *ātmavidyā*, enables him to destroy the misery. "He who knows the Ātman, fords across the ocean of sorrow," says the Upaniṣad. Vedānta begins, like all the other systems of Indian philosophy, with an initial pessimism. The imperfections and miseries of life are the starting point. Their pessimism is not final. A strong optimistic note is struck, that *mokṣa* destroys all sorrows and

secures the plentitude of bliss. It is not right to characterize such an attitude as pessimistic.

Max Müller remarks that it is an unfair charge to call Vedānta pessimistic. The Vedāntins have derived their name for "the good" from a word which originally meant Being and Real, *Sat*. The removal of suffering is the function of Philosophy. Pain and suffering are imperfect and in a perfect state they are annihilated. This is not the disposition we can call pessimism.

Vedānta seeks to journey from the world of dis-values to the world of values. It is essentially a philosophy of values. It is a system as well as a spiritual guide. There is no divorce between theory and practice, between philosophy and life. Theory and practice, *ācāra* and *vicāra*, keep close touch. Vedānta does not believe in an anaemic and unlived knowledge. The philosophic experience transforms man. It is this close alliance between religion and philosophy that has saved philosophy from becoming purely speculative. It is practical and has coloured Indian culture in all its aspects. Vedānta's approach to the nature of philosophy is distinct. Philosophy is not a perpetual adventure in the world of ideas with no final solutions. Philosophy is not the disturber of man's peace. It is not a sedative that lulls us to sleep.

Many of the European philosophical systems are intellectual efforts to study Reality. Huxley observes that "anybody with the requisite wits and learning can write philosophy; the problem is to be a philosopher or lover of wisdom." Heraclitus writes that "much learning does not produce understanding."

The Vedāntin's view is that the purpose of philosophy is not merely the discovery of Truth but its



realisation. The final authority is self-certifying experience. The experience transforms life unlike the life of the intellectual. It is the common experience of men that

one may stand very high in the intellectual scale, and yet be in complete opposition to spirit. Pride, self-centredness, attachment to one's own particular notions, may fill one's mind with continual agitations and anxieties. In one's study one may think like a spiritual man, and in the outside world behave like a carnal man. From thought to intention, from intention to will, and from will to action and conduct, the road is not smooth nor even continuous.

For the intuitive realization of the Truth, mere intellectual acuteness is not enough. It must be accompanied by a stern moral personal discipline. The realization inaugurates a new life. This does not mean that Vedānta abnegates its faith in inferential reasoning in respect of both its rules of generalization and its certification of fact and value. It transcends the rational mode and does not negate it. It is not geared on to any sectarian revelation. What is experienced intuitively is intellectually explained. The intellectual explanation is not the same as the intuitive realization. "Reading even the best cookery book is not equivalent to eating even the worst dinner."

When the Vedāntin says that *mokṣa* is attained by *Jñāna*, he means by *Jñāna*, *Sākṣātkāra*, realization and not relational knowledge. The Vedāntic conception of man, particularly of the Śaṅkara school, gives the clue to the relation between reason and religious experience. According to his reading of the Upaniṣads, each one of us is potentially universal consciousness and the mind at large. Men appear as a society of different island universes. The principle of indi-

vidualism is the result and the function of reason and brain. It embodies and particularizes the spirit and gives us the feeling that we are unrepeatable unique individuals, with our incommunicable private sensations and feelings, interests, and fancies. This makes us compete with one another. The aim of Vedānta is to get back and recover the integral consciousness that we are. The universal consciousness which is the spirit is funnelled through the brain and the nervous system which results in individuality. The celebrated French philosopher Bergson has pointed out that the function of the brain in man is *eliminative* and *productive*. It leaves only a small and special section of our experience for us and shuts out the rest in the interest of our biological survival. The spirit-consciousness can and does know everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. The brain delimits the consciousness and knows only what trickles from the universal consciousness. The brain is the reducing valve. We cannot have a science of the working of this universal consciousness. Huxley writes:

We had better admit, then, that there will probably never be a completely adequate science of man. There are all sorts of useful partial sciences, dealing with generalities and averages—such as economics and actuarial statistics, sociology and comparative religion and various brands of psychology. But there is no genuine anthropology, no full science of Man, in which the uniqueness of human beings takes its place along with their likeness, the irreducible diversities along with the unities. The art of life is still an art and is likely to remain one indefinitely.

The most distinguished para-psychologist of our age, Dr. Rhine, writes in his book, *New World of the Mind*, that “there is something operative in man that transcends the laws of matter. . . . The universe differs, therefore, from what the prevailing materialistic con-

cept indicates. It is one about which it is possible to be religious." Experiments in modern para-psychology conducted under the most stringent conditions point to actual facts of telepathy, chairvoyance, and precognition. They all go under the name of extra-sensory perception (ESP).

These odd exceptional inexplicable facts, however trivial in themselves, are always the point from which the next great and fundamental advance in human knowledge is made. The facts of paranormal psychology have give us the alternative to the current fashionable determinist view of man, i.e. that he is just a collection of neural events embellished by a phosphorescence of subjective recognition.

The universal consciousness in man is to be liberated by definite mental habits, personality traits and spiritual discipline. In the words of Blake, "If the doors of perception are cleansed, everything will appear to man as it is, infinite."

The Vedāntic ideal for man is not mere contemplation for its own sake. The first step is contemplation leading to God-union. Freedom from distracted existence, freedom from the lust of the eye, body and flesh are absolutely necessary. They secure spiritual regeneration. Pascal remarked, "The sum of evil would be much diminished if men could only learn to sit quietly in their rooms." Huxley significantly observes that "half at least of all morality is negative and consists in keeping out of mischief. The Lord's Prayer is less than fifty words long, and six of these words are devoted to asking God not to lead us into temptation." The Vedāntic discipline does not erect an insurmountable barrier between contemplation and action. It does not regard contemplation as the do-nothing attitude in life. It does not countenance a philosophy of life that



negates action, the will to action and the very thought of action. "We must think like men of action and act like men of thought." It is the wrong reading of the ideal of *sannyāsa* that associates it with world-denial. The realized souls are the 'active contemplatives' in Eckhart's phrase; they are ready to come down from heaven in order to bring a cup of water to their sick brother. They want to share their vision and experience with all. They ask us to climb the wall and see the vision. They are full of compassion. Their experience, they want to share with all. "The *Jīvan-muktas* of the Vedānta are men in whom the sea flows in their veins. . . and the stars are their jewels." When all things are perceived as infinite and holy, what motive can we have for covetousness or self-assertion, or for the pursuit of power and drearier forms of pleasure? "It is the contemplatives that keep the world disinfected. They are the salt of the earth." They bring back enlightening reports of our transcendent consciousness. They are the conduits and channels through which a little light flows into our dark world which is chronically dying for lack of light. "A world without the mystics is totally blind." The companionship with such men is the only way to fight against the attritions of our age. The age-old debate between the *actives* and the *contemplatives* is resolved when we learn to look into the inner world so that we may understand the outer. The outer world has its springs in the inner world. Contemplative life cleans the doors of perception. The life of contemplation is not easy for those that are unregenerate. It is not the result of learning, systematic philosophizing, that brings the experience. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* declares:<sup>16</sup> "This Self

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16. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I. ii. 23.

cannot be attained by instruction, nor even by much learning. It is to be attained by one whom the Self chooses. To such a one the Self reveals Its own value." Swāmi Vivekānanda declared that Hinduism is the only religion that has boldly declared that Scripture alone cannot help us to attain realization. For spiritual experience one has necessarily to be ethically perfect. The way to God-realization is only through good life. There is no other way to it. Spiritual wisdom cannot be had without moral qualifications and the cleansing of our hearts. We can never obtain saving wisdom by bypassing moral life. Spiritual life does not grow like grass. The effort of man is necessary.

The chief contention of Vedānta on the theoretical side is that verbal knowledge, discursive reason and systematic philosophizing cannot give us adequate description of the nature of spiritual Reality. Our education is predominantly verbal. Vedānta believes in a direct awareness of Reality, which verbal knowledge cannot give us. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* warns us not to reflect on many words, for that is mere weariness of speech. "It is not wisdom to be merely wise," declared Euripides the great dramatist. The Real cannot be known by vain and idle arguments. It is no use calling the mystics of the world cranks, quacks, charlatans and amateurs.

Spiritual experience is of the infinite Reality, which passes all understanding and yet admits of being directly and in some manner apprehended. It is a transcendence of the dual consciousness. It is a making known and not a bringing something into being. This task becomes most difficult because of self-love, our habits of mind, and personality traits. Systematic reasoning confirms our egoism and insolence. The con-

sciousness of reading all books is not spirituality. Egoism makes us confine to the here and now. The urge for self-transcendence is there at the heart of man. It is the divine irresistible urge in life. Such a self-transcendence becomes perfect only in spiritual experience. The God-surrogates, i.e., art, carnival, drugs, sex, etc. are the 'doors in the wall' to use H. G. Wells's phrase. But all these soon tire out man and pronounce distress and depression. Goethe writes, "We talk far too much, we should talk less and draw more. I personally should like to renounce speech altogether and, like organic nature, communicate everything I have to say in sketches." Reality for the Vedāntin is the primary fact of experience.

Vedānta gives a verbalistic dress to the central spiritual experience in the form of systematic reasoning, something which the rational nature of man cannot possibly do without. Systematic reasoning gives us the symbols of the unfathomable mystery. But we should not mistake symbol for the actual Reality. The chaff must not be mistaken for the kernel. Even those theistic schools that do not entertain the concept of an Absolute also feel that the Supreme Reality of religion cannot be intellectually apprehended and described in terms of discursive reason. One of the great mystics of the Christian tradition, St. John of the Cross, writes, "One of the greatest favours bestowed on soul transiently in this life is to enable it to see so distinctly and to feel so profoundly that it cannot comprehend God at all."

On the ethical side the Vedāntic tradition does not belittle the significance of our universe and life here. Vedānta requires and teaches us a way of life. It asks us to transform the institutions of the world



The realised soul should go to his business with his vision and not be tempted by the dirty devices of the world. He should set an example for others in society. The Kena Upaniṣad declares that "in this human life, we would sustain a great loss if we failed to make an effort to rise to spiritual Reality." Vedānta never emphasized piety as against the intellect. Vedānta asks us to begin with a faith that inquires. We should start with a working hypothesis. Faith enables us to step out and break away from what is purely empirical. It releases us from the tyranny of the world of perception. Faith gives us the necessary humility which becomes the solid foundation of our life.

The test of spirituality is the increase in spiritual values. An ordered society based on spiritual values grounded in morality is the ideal of Vedānta. The Vedāntic ideal is perfect rest and peace amidst ceaseless toil and incessant activity. It does not ask us to indulge in the natural appetites, nor does it ask us to suppress them, but urges us to utilize them to build the spiritual life. It neither negates the world nor affirms its autonomy, but only judges it in the measure it is useful to us to live our spiritual life.

## Chapter V

### THE TRIPLE TEXTS OF VEDĀNTA

The different schools of Vedānta derive their doctrines from the Triple texts:—*Upaniṣads*, The *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Vedānta Sūtras*. These texts are not merely bound up with the historical past, they have a message for all ages and are terrifically topical for us. We can never say that “we are superior to the ancients in spiritual depth or moral strength.” Before adverting to a detailed study of different systems of Vedānta, let us have a concise and clear account of these three texts.

#### I

The *Upaniṣads* constitute the concluding portion of the Vedas and hence are described as Vedānta. They represent the quintessence of the Vedas and embody the metaphysical doctrines and spiritual visions of the ancient seers and sages of India. They also outline the path to spiritual realisation.

The *Upaniṣads* are called Śruti. The Ṛṣis (also called *munis* and *kavis*) saw the truth and heard them. They are revealed truths and not composed ones. There are ethical scriptures composed by Manu, Yājñavalkya and Parāśara on the basis of the Śruti. They are called Smṛtis. The authority of the Śruti is primary. When Smṛti conflicts with Śruti, it is set aside.

The term *Upaniṣad* is interpreted in different ways: (1) to sit close by devotedly (*Upaniṣad* i.e. *sad upani*), (2) secret doctrine (*guhya-ādeśaḥ*), (3) the term refers to the key passages in the *Upaniṣads*. According to Śaṅkara, it is that which destroys ignorance and leads to Brahman.

The Spanish writer Mascaro described the Upaniṣads as the 'Himalayas of the Soul.' "Just as that great mountain determines the climate, the rainfall and the physical features of the Peninsula, so do these heights of wisdom determine the quality of the spiritual wisdom of the race that inhabits it."

Śaṅkara regards his Vedānta, a garland of the Upaniṣadic sentences. It is taught by illumined teachers to spiritual aspirants who have given evidence of their earnestness. It is not a free broadcasting of truth to one and all, regardless of their eligibility.

The Upaniṣads were translated into Persian in 1640 by Dara Shikoh, son of Shahjahan. In Kashmir, one Le Gentil, a French resident of Faizabad attached to the court of Shuga Ūddaulah, presented the manuscript to Antequetil Dupéron who rendered the Persian version into Latin. Schopenhauer had this Latin text of the Upaniṣads on his table and was in the habit, before going to bed, of performing his devotion from its pages.

He writes: "From every sentence (of the Upaniṣads) deep original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. In the whole world...there is no study...so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. They are the products of the highest wisdom. They are destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people."

Max Müller compares the philosophy of the Upaniṣads to the light of the morning and to the pure air of the mountains—so simple, and so true, if once understood.

In Deussen's opinion the Upaniṣads have tackled every fundamental problem of life. They have given



us intimate account of Reality. W. B. Yeats observes, "Nothing that has disturbed the schools to controversy escaped their notice."

Swāmi Vivekānanda had all the inspiration for his teaching in the Upaniṣads. He declared: "Let me tell you, we want strength, and the Upaniṣads are a great source of strength. Therein lies power to invigorate the whole world. They call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, the downtrodden of all races, all creeds and sects, to stand on their feet and be free; freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads. The truth of the Upaniṣads are before you, take them up, live upto them and the salvation of India will be at hand."

John Eglinton in his Memoir A. E. has a passage which describes the influence of the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*, p. 20: "Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson and Thoreau among moderns have something of this vitality and wisdom, but we can find all they have said and much more in the grand sacred books of the East. The *Bhagavad Gītā* and the Upaniṣads contain such godlike fulness of wisdom on all things that I feel the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back through a thousand passionate lives, full of feverish strife for and with shadows, ere they could have written with such certainty of things which the soul feels to be true."

There are as many as two hundred Upaniṣads. But all of them are not authentic, nor are all of them of equal importance and significance. Ten of them are accepted as authoritative. They are commented on by the founders of the schools of Vedānta. They are *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Taittirīya*,

*Aitareya, Chandogya, Bṛhadārāṇyaka.* Most of the Upaniṣads are pre-Buddhist. They roughly belong to the sixth century B.C.

The Upaniṣads are not all alike. They differ in their length and methods of exposition. Some are only a few verses and others are very long. Some are in verse and some are in prose. Yet others combine both.

In style and manner, they differ widely. Sometimes we have simple concrete narrative, sometimes abstract metaphysical speculation. We have long argumentative dialogues. The tone of the Upaniṣads also fluctuates. Some passages show high seriousness and others homely humour and yet others innumerable analogies.

The devout Hindus believe that all the Upaniṣads are spiritual and embody a definite outlook. Mahatma Gandhi writes commenting on the first verse of the *Īśāvāsya*: "I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the Upaniṣads and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden, to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse of the *Īśopaniṣad* were left intact in the memory of the Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever."

The quest of the Upaniṣadic seers is a deep and earnest one. They feel the urgency of the task as the most important in life. The quest is the result of the reflective consciousness of man and his sense of personal freedom. The unique nature of man is his eligibility for knowledge and action (*Jñāna Karmādhikārāt*). Man is more than what he knows himself to be. He rises to the essential human life when he acts on his choice, guided by ends which he conceives as worthy of his attainment. So long as he is governed

by his reflexes or conditioned by them, or propelled by his instincts, he is still at the animal level. When he rises to the level of rational thinking he conceives different Ends or Values and seeks to achieve them by the determination of his will and overcomes the opposition to them arising from his unregenerate instincts and emotions.

Most of the values are not actually achieved and are not easy to attain. Even at the rational level man is guided by utility and seeks to live a life of enlightened self-interest and gives it the name of Utilitarianism. The reflective consciousness of man plunges him into an earnest investigation of the different ends of life, e.g. wealth, sex, fame, a life of ease, valour, and this *vicāra* yields the right discrimination between the unreal and the Real. It is expressed in the celebrated prayer, "From the unreal lead me to the Real, from darkness lead me to Light, from death lead me to Immortality."

The knowledge of the Real is declared to be comprehensive of all. It is called *parā-vidyā* (supreme knowledge). The quest is for that, knowing which, all other things become known. It is that knowledge by knowing which what is unheard becomes heard, what is not perceived becomes known.

This divine ancient wisdom of the Upaniṣad is further described as the Infinite. The infinite is happiness. There is no happiness in the finite, so one must desire to obtain the infinite. The Real is not only an object of mere importance. Its knowledge and realisation dispels all our doubts and disbeliefs and ends our tensions and strifes and vouchsafes unexcellible bliss from which there is no return to the world of change and sorrow.



The Īśa asks the question, "What delusion, what sorrow, can there be to him who has the vision of unity"? Nārada approaches Sanatkumāra for such instruction which puts an end to all sorrow: "Venerable sir, I know only the texts. It has been heard by me from those like you that he who knows the self crosses sorrow." (*tarati śokam*).

The knowledge of the Real frees us from all fear and secures for us bliss. The knowledge and spiritual realisation of the Real results in the transformation of our selves into the Real. It enables us to overcome our sorrow and sins.

The Upaniṣads declare that quest of the Infinite is the supreme end of life. It describes the infinite in condensed statement. "It is the soul of truth, the anchor of life, the delight of the mind and the fullness of peace and eternity."

The quest of the infinite is relentlessly and perseveringly carried out by the aspirant as a result of his conscious choice. This he does as a result of his discriminative sense, *Viveka*. This sense enables him to assess the evanescent nature of finite values and their drawbacks. The aspirant gets his 'discriminative sense' through the instruction and initiation of the *guru* who has himself realised the Infinite. The *guru* represents the living voice that transmutes the aspirant. Commenting on a particular passage in the Upaniṣad, Śaṅkara observes that "even one well versed in the scriptures should not set about seeking the knowledge of the Infinite by himself." Going to the *guru* is no mere formality, nor an evasion of one's responsibility. It is a necessity. He who has a *guru* knows, declares the *Chandogya*. The quest of the Upaniṣads is

for that Infinite which is one, secondless, eternal and is the Absolute Reality.

Absolute Reality is also unconditioned existence (*cit*) and unexcellable bliss (*ānanda*) and perfection (*ananta*). It cannot be known directly like any finite object through the methods of discursive reason. It is beyond the reach of words and the comprehension of the mind. Though it cannot be known by reason, it can be realised by spiritual experience (*sākṣātkāra*). It vivifies all that is there in the world. The discriminative students of spiritual life find that no finite pleasure can give us knowledge of the Infinite.

Naciketas turns down the glittering offers of Yama, women, wealth and long life as transient and trifling, and sticks to his boon for the knowledge of the Infinite.

Maitreyī exclaims that she has no use for that wealth which cannot secure her immortality. The knowledge of the Infinite is sought for its excellence and for its power of ending all sorrows.

The Upaniṣads look at knowledge as the chief means (*jñāna*) of Brahman realisation. They regard ritual and performance of ceremonies as not safe methods for the attainment of *mokṣa*. The *Muṇḍaka* declares: "Unsafe are the boats of sacrifice to go to farthest shore; unsafe are the eighteen books where the lower actions are explained." "Imagining that ritual and charity are the final good, the unwise see not the path supreme. Indeed they have in high heaven the reward for their pious actions; but thence they fall and come to earth or even down to lower regions." "These men abiding in the midst of ignorance, but thinking themselves wise and learned, fools, aimlessly go hither and thither, like blind led by

blind." The Upaniṣad declares that there is no other way than knowledge for the realisation of the Infinite to end our sorrows.

Equally emphatic is the Upaniṣad on the need for ethical excellence for the spiritual aspirant. In every one of the Upaniṣads the need for self-control and integration of human personality is stressed. That is the first step, which can never be bypassed. The *Kaṭha* asks the aspirant to direct the senses *to look in* and divert them from their natural way of *looking outward*. The Upaniṣad pleads for yoking the senses to spiritual aim. The need for ethical life is an imperative. "Those who have not refrained from wickedness, the unrestrained, the unmeditative or one who has no peace of mind cannot attain the Infinite even by knowledge."

Taking the Upaniṣads as a whole, we find that there are at least two different ways of looking at the Infinite. One of the trends describes Brahman as a homogeneous noncomposite consciousness, that is, perfection without a second. It is negatively described as *neti neti* and the finite has no place in it. It is described as unlike all that we know. The world of matter and souls are described as its appearance. Even this appearance is traced to Brahman, as not affecting its purity. There is no other Reality than Brahman. Hence, everything is traced to it. The relation between Brahman and other appearances is one-sided. The appearance is dependent on Brahman, but Brahman is in no way touched by the impurities of appearance. The Upaniṣads lend support to such a view. Śaṅkara develops this line of thought and regards the world as an appearance, i.e. dependent for its existence on Brahman; viewed independently of Brahman



it has no status. That is all the meaning of *māyā*. The Upaniṣadic seers employ the objective method and trace all that exists to Brahman. They do not admit that the existence of the world of things or human experience is an inexplicable datum. Nor do they admit that the universe is self-complete. They examine serially several phenomena as the proposed root causes of the world, e.g. Time, Nature, Necessity, Chance, the Elements, etc., and find all of them unsatisfactory. So they posit the infinite spirit as the cosmic principle to account for the universe. They examine the psychic principles and submit it to intense analysis. This is undertaken in the dialogues between Prajāpati on the one hand, Indra and Virocana on the other and between Bhṛgu and Varuṇa. The individual soul's essence is neither the body, nor a bundle of qualities, nor is it a mere state of mind. It is of the same essence as that of Brahman. The Upaniṣads, according to Śaṅkara, adopt the synthetic method and establish the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. The principle underlying the world as a whole and that which forms the essence of man are ultimately the same. This explicit identification is declared in the celebrated words of Uddālaka to his son a number of times: *"All that is, is of the nature of the Self. That is the Truth. That thou art."*

This identification of the self and Brahman, according to some Upaniṣads, is not attained elsewhere. Such an experience is possible here and now. This is the famous doctrine of *jīvanmukti* referred to by Śaṅkara. In the Upaniṣads we find support for Śaṅkara's doctrine of renunciation also. *Vairāgya* is praised and is also advocated as the sovereign method

for spiritual realisation. The triad suggested by Śaṅkara is *vicāra*, *viveka* and *vairāgya*.

Among European scholars Dr. Deussen holds the view that the prevailing doctrine of the Upaniṣads is illusionism and pantheism.

But our modern scholars have differed from Śaṅkara in their interpretation of the Upaniṣads. They all hold to monism but are not reconciled to the view that the world is an illusion. They have interpreted the nature of Brahman in a different manner. They declare that the Infinite does not exclude the finite. The universe is rooted in it. The Infinite is the Real of the Real. It is in all. *All this is Brahman. The world is the moving image of eternity.* The moving image does not hide the Eternity behind it. It gives us glimpses of the Eternal. The poet Tagore goes farther than this, and declares that the world is a manifestation of the Infinite. It is *Līlā vāda* and not *Māyā vāda*. The Infinite is not a bare abstraction. It is a rich harmonious system which contains all. The Infinite of the Upaniṣads is looked upon as the Absolute of the German philosopher Hegel. It reconciles all opposites. It is in one phase *dynamic* and in another aspect it is *static*. The logical difficulties of synthesising contradictions made Śaṅkara describe the Infinite as devoid of any determination or action. Modern commentators declare that there is a special logic of the Infinite. In the words of Aurobindo "the logic of the Infinite is the magic of the finite." The *saprapañca* view establishes an organic connection between the Infinite and the world. There are several passages in the Upaniṣads that declare that Brahman transforms himself into the world of things and he is also the material cause of the world. "As the spider emits and withdraws the

web, as herbs sprout out on earth, and as hair grows on the head and body of man—so from the eternal Infinite springs this universe.” The Infinite is immanent as well as transcendent. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* the concept of the Lord as the inner ruler (*antaryāmin*) is developed and described at large. Activity is attributed to the Infinite as entering the souls and things of men. The spirit seeps into all that is there in the universe. But for the presence of the spirit the emergence of life from inorganic matter, to human consciousness and, from the human to the divine is not possible. It is the presence of the spirit that makes evolution possible.

The individual soul is represented as a friend of the Infinite. He is to dedicate himself to the Lord. The doctrine of self-surrender or *bhakti* as found in the *Gītā* is not so prominent in the Upaniṣads. We have mention of several contemplative disciplines (*Upāsanas*) to reach the fellowship of the Lord. The Infinite is also described as a supreme auspicious personality. There are a few passages that declare that the Lord’s grace is the only means for spiritual realisation. We have a passage in *Kaṭha*: “The Atman cannot be attained by the study of the Vedas, nor by intellect, nor even by much learning.” This passage is interpreted as to yield the Advaitic sense. In the *Svetāśvatara* Upaniṣad we have the *bhakti* element predominant. Rāmānuja finds support for his doctrine in the nature of the Infinite as dynamic and as transforming itself into the things of the world. It is difficult to be dogmatic and say that the Upaniṣads all speak of one view only.

Dr. Radhakrishnan has done a great deal in establishing the positive interpretation of the nature



of the Infinite in the Upaniṣads. In his profound introduction to the text and English translation and notes of the Upaniṣads and his articles (*The Indian Philosophical Review*, Vol. III, No. 3), he describes the Infinite not as an abstract formal principle but as an active universal consciousness. It is the unity of the finite and infinite. "It exists both in itself and for itself," as Hegel puts it. "The Absolute, i.e. Brahman, is the fullest concrete and most real Being." It is the living dynamic spirit, the source and the container of the infinitely varied forms of Reality. It is the spiritual spring which breaks, blossoms and differentiates itself into a number of finite centres. It is not mere knowledge or power or action. It is living unity of essence and existence.

The positive view of the Infinite and the view that the world is not an illusion is supported by scholars like Dr. Bhandarkar and Hopkins. Dr. Bhandarkar writes that "the opinion expressed by some eminent scholars that the burden of the Upaniṣadic teaching is the illusive character of the world and the reality of one soul only is manifestly wrong, and, I may even say, is indicative of an uncritical judgment."

Prof. Hopkins puts the question and answers it: "Is there anything in the early Upaniṣads to show that the authors believed in the objective world being an illusion? The answer is nothing at all."

The Upaniṣads have influenced Indian philosophical thought not only in ancient India but also in our day. They represent the great spiritual treasure of India.

## II

Sri Aurobindo writes: "The greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the human race, the most perfect system of Karma-Yoga known to man in the past is to be found in the Bhagavad-Gītā. In that famous episode of the *Mahābhārata* the great basic lines of Karma-Yoga are laid for all time, with incomparable mastery and the infallible eye of an assured experience. It aims at the secret of dynamic and not only static identity with the inner presence. Self-surrender is indispensable to the supra-mental change. It is through its action that dynamic identity is possible."

The Bhagavad-Gītā is an episode in the *Bhisma Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* (chapters 25 to 42). The *Bhārata* has a special place in Indian culture and religion. It is the biggest epic. It is *mahat* because it is vast, it is *Bhārata* because it is full of weight (*bhāra*), hence it is called *Mahābhārata*. Further, it is stated that "in respect of the four-fold values of life, *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*, what is here is also dealt with elsewhere, what is not here cannot be found elsewhere."

The importance of the scripture is accepted on all hands. Its popularity is only second to the Upaniṣads. It is the favourite scripture of the ancients and the moderns. The Vedānta philosophy in all its forms accepts the Gītā as one of the *triple texts* i.e., source books for its doctrines. It is commented on by all the great ācāryas, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva.

The ancients have sung the praise of the Gītā. The great Śaṅkara declared that "a little of the Gītā will do, it is as profound as the sacred waters of Ganges.

He who reads and sings the Gītā, why need he toil at other sacred scriptures?" The Gītā is compared in a familiar verse, to the nectar like milk derived from the cows called Upaniṣads. Its dramatic setting has attracted great attention. The dialogue between two of India's fascinating figures, in a critical moment, heightens the value of the poem. The occasion and the personalities contribute to the importance of the theme. The American professor Edgerton adds that the literary merit of the poem is not small: "The pithy anuṣṭub verses, the flow of the lines, the similes and metaphors—these give it a form of interest all its own."

The Gītā has enjoyed an unique reputation throughout the ages. It has influenced Sanskr̥t literature considerably. It is mentioned in the *Varāha*, *Skanda* and *Padma Purāṇas*. Dr. V. Raghavan in one of his revealing articles gathers for us details, like the popularity of the recitation of the Gītā for securing happiness, mentioned in Bāṇa's *Kādambari*. In Kalhaṇa's *Rāja Tarāṅgiṇi* it is recorded that King Avantivarman had the Gītā read to him in his last hours.

The Gītā form of writing is very popular with us. One of our poetesses has set Mahatma Gandhi's life in the metre of the Gītā.

As for the message of the Gītā, we are to be cautious. One cannot escape the ancient commentators nor can we completely trust any of them. The three distinguished ancient commentators have interpreted the Gītā so as to uphold the doctrines of their system. This has led to the straining of the meaning of many verses to yield each his view. The sectarian



interpretations have led to polemics and bitter criticism among them. The language of the Gītā and the flexible nature of the Sanskrit verses make different interpretations possible and to some extent plausible. But to a disinterested student, the Gītā does *not completely nor exclusively* follow one or other of the traditional schools of Vedānta.

It has a general outlook, which is suited to all men who have a spiritual bent of mind. It represents, in the words of Aurobindo, "A teaching which is universal, whatever may have been its origins. Its language and structure and combination of balancing of ideas belong neither to the temper of the sectarian teacher, nor to the spirit of a rigorous dogmatist. It is an undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a vast, synthetic mind. It is the richest synthesis of Indian culture."

It is the feeling of all the modern interpreters of the Gītā e.g. Mahatma Gandhi, Tilak, Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan and others, that the Gītā is a world-scripture. It is neither old nor new. It is eternal. Its influence on renascent thinkers in India is profound and is more far-reaching than any other single influence. It has guided the life and the action of our leaders. It has been the spiritual charter to all of them. It has set the moral ideal before India. Referring to this scripture Radhakrishnan writes: "It sets forth as a tradition that which has emerged from the religious life of mankind. It is articulated by a profound seer, who sees truth in its many-sidedness and believes in its saving power. It represents not any sect of Hinduism, but Hinduism as a whole, not merely Hinduism but religion as such." Its universality has no limit of time or space.

One important factor that strikes the student of Gītā is that there is frank disagreement about the message of the Gītā among ancient commentators, and there is a striking agreement among the modern commentators on the message of the Gītā. Its message is agreed to as essential to the spiritual regeneration of man and is applicable to all men and at all times. Its significance to man is spiritual and social.

Mahatma Gandhi regarded the Gītā as his mother. He writes: "I lost my earthly mother who gave me birth long ago, but this eternal mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since, she has never changed, she has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom. . . . I can declare that the Gītā is ever presenting me with fresh lessons, and if somebody should tell me that it is my delusion, my reply to him would be, I should hug this delusion as my richest treasure."

He very clearly states the Gītā-message to us. "It calls upon us to dedicate ourselves, body, mind and soul to pure duty and not become mental voluptuaries at the mercy of chance desires and undisciplined impulses."

The ideal of the Gītā is compressed in the two words *Karma Yoga*. The ideal man of the Gītā is called a Yogin, and the method is described as Yoga. Spiritual regeneration of man is to be effected by Karma Yoga. Man in this world of ours exists not in a perfect state. He is assailed by several temptations and feels unnerved. He doubts and is unable to decide. He makes up his mind but is not able to execute. His will is paralysed, his mind is confused, his vision clouded. At times he is enveloped by ignorance about the beginning and end of things. He has scientific skill and

technical power but is not able to use them for social good. His advance in knowledge is marked by the deterioration in his character. He is at times a paradox to himself. He passes through several moods in a single day, and has no steady purpose. He swings between mania and depression, he is a pendulum between a tear and a joy. If he has the knowledge of ends he is unable to will them into action. If he has a firm will, he has no knowledge of ends. His possession of power is so great, that he has no knowledge and wisdom to use it aright. Scientific power has made men feel that there is no need for faith in a God. Scientific cunning and technological powers have made men feel autonomous and self-sufficient. So they put their faith in science. The sense of power has made men go about as they like. Militant atheism and irrational materialism have become fashionable. Men have lost their faith, though they want to believe. This 'will to believe' makes men put their faith in strange gods such as the *Nation*, *Ideology*, *Science*, *Art* etc. These have taken the place of God. Kingsley Martin, the Editor of the intellectual weekly, *New Statesman and Nation*, writes: "Men and women are now unable to face the loneliness and aridity of the gospel of science and therefore though without any faith in religious dogmas, seek a personal religion to give them inner comfort. *They do not believe, but they desire to believe.* I see very clearly every day, there is no irrationality, that the will to believe cannot overcome."

The modern man in spite of his immense knowledge and astounding powers of organisation is still no near to social peace or individual happiness. He is stricken by psychic anxiety, cloven by emotional



conflicts, beset by economic insecurities and assailed by political doubts, hence, knows not his duties.

It is to such distracted men the Gītā is addressed. Arjuna (the representative man, the chosen instrument and the close companion of the Lord) on the battle-field, stands before his cousins, who have no sense of justice or love for him and are ready to kill him and deprive him of his part of the kingdom. On this historical battle-field what was at stake was the challenge to Dharma. Arjuna is not able to face the call of duty and take arms against injustice. He knows the injustice. He has not only power but also the help of many kings to fight. All the methods of compromise have been tried out and proved of no avail. Judged by the normal standard of ordinary morality, Duryodhana and his party deserve to be killed to vindicate Dharma.

In the face of gross injustice, Arjuna, the great warrior, who knows his duty, his prowess, the justice of his cause, falters and wants to run away from the path of duty, because of sentimental feelings. He says that he is in great sorrow, that he would not see the death of his cousins. The ghastly immediate consequence of blood-shed and the death of his cousins unnerved him. He came to the battle-field to punish his wicked cousins who robbed him of his kingdom, banished him into the forest for thirteen years and treacherously refused to redeem their pledge to give back even a part of the kingdom. He is unhinged at the possibility of a fratricidal war, so he puts on the role of a sanyasin and trots out arguments in favour of peace and a life of renunciation. His pseudo-pacifism is foreign to him. He cries out, "Alas, what a great sin have we resolved to commit in striving

to slay our own people, through our greed for the pleasures of the kingdom, for better would it be, for me if the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra with weapons in hand, should slay me in the battle, while I remain unresisting and unarmed." Arjuna dreads to do his duty, so he invents arguments to give it up. He seeks escape into inaction. His failure is felt in his limbs. They quail, he perspires, his mind and gait are reeling. He becomes unsteady and drowned in sorrow. He seeks a way out of the crisis by taking refuge in the Lord, by putting himself in the place of the disciple in distress who seeks instruction. We are all like Arjuna. He is our representative. The message of the Gītā is for all of us.

Arjuna's arguments are refuted by the powerful convincing discourse of the Lord, and also by the demonstration of the Lord's transfiguration which Arjuna is shown. He is put to his duty and made to do it in a spirit of perfect conviction. Arjuna says in the end, "Destroyed is my delusion, I have come into my own through Thy grace. I stand firm, with my doubts dispelled. I shall act according to Thy word."

In short, Arjuna was a *sakta* (sentimental) and he is taught the goal and the way of yoga. He is asked to fight, no doubt, many times, but not like an unregenerate soldier but as a yogi. He is asked to establish the God-centred life and then fight. He is asked to become a Karma-yogi. The superiority of Karma-yoga is asserted in comparison to all the other ways of God-realisation. The yogin of the Gītā is greater than the ascetic. He is considered to be greater than the man of knowledge and greater than the man of ritual; then, therefore, become a yogin, is the instruction.

The ideal of Karma-Yoga is the best way to God-realisation. It includes (*jñāna*) knowledge of God, (*bhakti*) devotion to God, (*sannyāsa*) renunciation, (*karma* and *seva*) action and service, with all this, it does not renounce action. It is not world-negation, but is self-negation. It is not freedom from action but freedom in action. It is the most desirable and feasible means for God-realisation, within the reach of all of us. The faith of the Karma-yogin is the first thing to be noted. The yogin is not a rationalist, in the narrow sense of the term, nor is he an agnostic or a sceptic. He is not an unbeliever. The first article of his faith is the belief in the existence of the omnipotent and loving nature of the supreme personality of God. Faith in God and His goodness is the foundation of the yogin's character. The God of the Karma-Yogin is immanent as well as transcendent. He has fashioned the world by exerting his power on *prakṛti*. He is organic to the universe. This means, the world is dependent on him, but he is not dependent on it. The Lord is the father of this world, the mother, the supporter and the grand-sire. He is the object of all knowledge, the purifier, the syllable *aum*, the *yogas* and the *Sāma Veda*. He is the goal, the upholder, the Lord, the witness and the abode, the refuge and the friend. He is the origin, the dissolution, the ground and the resting place and the imperishable seed."

The God of the yogin does not sit on the wings of the universe and watch the drama of life. God is in us, with us and above us. He has left his impress on Nature and man. The Lord says, "I am seated in the heart of all." The Lord is the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities, is the Lord of the world and



friend of all (*suhṛdaṁ sārvaabhūtānām*). He is dynamic, he incarnates himself to redeem injustice at all critical times. He imparts wisdom and drives away despair in his devotees. Further, the yogin believes that souls are immortal, pure in their intrinsic nature, eternal and are uncreated essences. The world of nature is the handiwork of God and hence, is governed by moral Laws and it is not *a-moral* or unorganised. He believes in the Law of Karma i.e. that actions have reactions, that there is nothing private or unimportant in the world. He holds that man takes a number of births to realise the fellowship of the Lord.

This raises the question as to what makes men oblivious and neglectful of their duty. In short, what is it that holds man in bondage and eclipses God's light from his vision? It is this state that is referred to as the *fall* in the Christian terminology and as *avidyā* in Vedānta. The cause of this bondage is vividly described in the Gītā. It is passions, sense-attachment, anger, and imperishable desires, that hold back men in bondage. Passions and desire take their abode in the sense organs, and delude men. They are the enemies and the foul destroyers of knowledge and wisdom. They veil the real nature of the soul and God from man.

It is this unregenerate nature of man that is responsible for the anti-social, selfish, non-sensible and occasionally criminal actions of men. It is the cause of the inhumanity of man to man. In short it is the cause for anarchy among nations and listlessness in men.

The way out of this predicament is Karma-Yoga. This path is first and foremost opposed to complete

renunciation of all works as the goal for God-realisation.

In the history of Indian thought two ways of spiritual realisation have been preached, one is the way of complete renunciation i.e. the giving up all works. The only thing that we can do is to get out of life. We must keep ourselves pure from the stain of action. The world is a snare, it is a nightmare, we can only wake up. Any type of action we produce results in things that bind us to *samsāra*. Action forges chains and binds us for ever. So let us renounce all action. The Gītā is opposed to such a renunciation.

The positive view of life is called the *pravṛtti mārga* which makes men live an active life for securing the material and other goods. In the words of Professor Hiriyanna, the Gītā has discovered the golden mean between the two opposing ideals. "It preserves the excellence of both the methods. While it does not abandon activity, it preserves the spirit of renunciation. It commends a strenuous life, and yet gives no room for the play of selfish impulses." The ideal of Karma-Yoga keeps the spirit of renunciation and combines it with a life of ceaseless activity. This ideal is given wide and permanent currency by the Gītā. The Gītā has focussed this practical teaching, in its splendidly devised setting. This ideal is the central message of the Gītā according to all moderns—Tilak, Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo, Besant, Tagore, Vinobaji and Vivekānanda.

The Karma-yoga ideal is in keeping with the biological and psychological nature of man. Activity is the very breath of human existence. Man cannot live even for a moment without action. Cosmic existence is based on dynamic activity. Act we must for

keeping life and there is no escape from it. It is necessary for any social order. Not all action is Karma-yoga. Nor all giving up is renunciation. Karma-yoga doctrine requires us to lead an active moral life and still escape the bondage that our actions forge for us. That is the secret of Karma-yoga. The active moral life of man is to be lived in a particular spirit. It is this spirit that quite paradoxically transmutes activity into a condition of freedom, from that of bondage.

Karma-yoga is not mechanical activity. It is not physical interaction. Nor is it the mere promptings of instinct, as in the animal world. It is not even the egotistic activity of a so-called utilitarian, who acts on pleasure principle. It is a yoga i.e. an activity which seeks God-union by a definite method.

It is not unconsidered action, nor vague speculation. It takes intellect into account. An enlightened understanding is the necessary preliminary for Karma-yoga. Further, the agent must act from a sense of duty and not from the desire for any particular fruit. He must not be obsessed by the idea of the result. This detachment is absolutely necessary for the yoga. It makes for equanimity and does not disturb us and makes for efficient action. It secures concentration and makes one-pointed attention possible. Besides, once the agent is not oppressed by the idea of the fruits of the action, there is no temptation or chance of his adopting any unscrupulous means to achieve his end.

Here it may be questioned, as to what serves as a motive for action in the doings of the Karma-yogin. Motiveless action is psychologically impossible. The author of the Gītā does not deny all motives. He only denies selfish motives. The central motive that



actuates the Karma-yogin is the 'Love of God i.e. *Īśvara-prīti*. He is not a stoic who prides upon his sense of fortitude and powers of self-denial. He renounces not only the desire for the fruit of the action, but also the sense of agency.

It is quite possible for man to be detached about the fruits of the action, but it is impossible to rid himself of the sense of agency. It is in this effort the Karma-yogin needs 'Devotion' and 'Surrender' to the Lord. Without a complete knowledge of the philosophical truths and the love of God, and an unreserved surrender to God, it is not possible for the yogin to give up his sense of agency and feel himself as an instrument of the Lord, to do His will. Whatever may be the differences among the ancient commentators of the *Gītā*, they are all agreed that the *Gītā* teaches all the yogas, karma, bhakti and jñāna. Modern commentators have shown that Bhakti and Jñāna are not exclusive of Karma-yoga.

The renunciation element in the Karma-yoga is the giving up of the desire for the fruit of the action and the sense of agency. The positive element is the love of God and the willing co-operation to carry out His ideal. This is the ideal of the welfare of the world (*Lokasaṃgraha*). The Karma-yoga ideal is not for extra-ordinary men. It is within the reach of all of us. Its scope is comprehensive. It is not for a select privileged few. It does not make impossible demands on man. Nor does it say that all must do the same thing. Its way of life is not ascetic. It stands for an all-round development of man. No side of human nature is to be cheated, none over-paid. It stands for the doctrine of moderation. "Yoga is not for him who eats too much, or abstains too much from eating.

It is not for him who sleeps too much or keeps awake late. For a man who is temperate in his food and recreation, who is restrained in all his actions and who has regulated his sleep and vigils, yoga puts an end to all his sorrow." The morality of the Karma-yogin lays stress on self-control and not on repression. It stands for *saṁyama* (perfect control) resulting in an integrated personality. It asks each individual to pursue the calling or the duty that is nearest to his *svabhāva* (temperament). It equates duty with one's nature (*svabhāva* with *svadharma*). The pursuit of one's nature makes for ease, spontaneity and grace in the actions of man. It also avoids social waste and effects perfect co-ordination. Karma-yoga insists on each individual to take to his own *svadharma* and to do his duty that is native to his self. The Gītā is harsh on those who take to others' duty, and forbids it. The moral life of the Karma-yogin is not arid; there is joy and perfect freedom in it. It is not a cold gospel that asks us to repress our impulses, endure all evils, biting our lips. It is not a kill-joy morality. It stands for a "life guided by knowledge and inspired by love."

The greatness of the Gītā as a world-scripture consists in the fact that it makes its chief ideal of Karma-yoga a concrete way of life. We have instruction on all details about food regulation, the technique of meditation, duties and responsibilities, the nature and types of gifts. It is complete and comprehensive in its details. Man must live as the active contemplative, who lives in the world, and is not of it, who regards all as his own self, and who sees divinity in all. The Karma-yogin is a *bhakta* and a *jñānin*. He

brings his devotion into action. The Gītā ideal is *wisdom* i.e. knowledge in action.

The religion of the Karma-yogin is the genuine spiritual religion the world needs. The God of the Gītā is known for his tolerance and non-dogmatism. He declares, "As men approach me so do I accept them, men on all sides follow my path." The theism of the Gītā is tolerant. It makes for no creedal wars. It stands for the Fellowship of Faiths. It breathes an air of tolerance and represents the universal elements of religion. It makes out that religion should help us to lead a good and useful life. "Religion is of the nature of Truth, is the repose of life; the delight of the mind and is the fullness of peace and eternity."

The perennial value of Gītā and its eternal significance is described by our first Governor-General, Warren Hastings, in his introduction to the English translation of the Gītā by Charles Wilkins (1785). He writes that "works like the Bhagavad Gītā will survive when the British Dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist and when the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance." The Gītā is with us, the British rule is ended, Warren Hastings is vindicated and Gītā is established.

The Gītā ideal has not merely a national significance. Its message is for all and is for all times. Referring to its universality, Aldous Huxley in his introduction to the translation of the Gītā by Swami Prabhavananda and Isher Wood, writes: "The Gītā is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the perennial philosophy ever to have been made. Hence, its enduring value is not only for Indians,



but for all mankind. Its significance is global and its message is terrifically topical to us."

Krishna, the World-teacher (Jagadguru) is better known than the pastoral Kṛṣṇa or Kṛṣṇa the man of action. Vinobaji writes, "Let us not say, Arjuna had Kṛṣṇa; where are we to find our Kṛṣṇa? Let us not get caught in the fallacy of historicity, that there was an individual called Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa shines in the heart of each of us. He is nearer to us than the nearest. So, let us place the flaws and falsehoods of our heart before him and say, 'Oh Lord, I take refuge in You, You are my sole master (Guru). Show me the right way. I shall tread only the path You show.' If we do so, He who drove Arjuna's chariot will drive ours too; we ourselves shall hear the Gītā in His own voice and He will lead us to victory."

The universal nature of the message of the Gītā is consistent with reason and the demands of humanity. God according to Gītā is not exhausted or completely revealed in only one form. There is not only one incarnation of God. All the forms in which divinity manifests are all true and are of equal value. Lord Kṛṣṇa goes further and declares, "Whatever form any devotee with faith wishes to worship, I make that faith of his steady." Such an attitude alone can make for the Fellowship of Faiths. The central message of the Gītā is not violence or the goad to fight and declare war. It is the gospel that teaches us the way to perfect one's self and realise the divine potential in man. The Gītā has influenced contemporary Indian thought as no other single book has done. *"It is catholic in its message, comprehensive in its outlook and concrete in its suggestions."* Its great merit is that it does not preach an impossible and austere morality.

It is a layman's gospel. It is supremely alive to the differences of the minds and temperaments of individuals. It makes provision for the diversified individuals that inhabit the earth. Its message does not smoothen out all differences and steam-roll all into one. It allows each to grow to his best according to his grain. It does not bother how big a circle we draw, it insists that there must be always a centre for it. It is particular that we must stand on our own feet, even if bare, rather than in borrowed shoes. We must stand erect and free. It pleads that we must first study the truths of scripture from a realised Guru. This is called *Śravaṇa*. Secondly, we are to critically examine the scripture-taught truth through reasoning (*manana*). After this we must intensively and continually meditate on the truths, till it results in a vivid direct realisation of God. For this moral discipline, what is absolutely necessary is the consolidation of the three-level practice in our thought, speech and action. The Gītā has given us the religion of spiritual Humanism. It presents a complete and integrated spiritual ideal for man. It advocates the love of God as the supreme end of life. In making *Bhakti* the supreme ideal, it gives a blow to the mechanical life of the round of rituals that is mistaken for religion. It also criticises the vague, unrelated, speculation of religious categories. It advocates God-love in a manner which is open to all. It breaks down all the barriers that divide man and man, God and man. It throws open the road to God, to all men irrespective of their caste, creed, sex and status in life. It only insists on a contrite heart.

The Gītā insistence on morality saves the doctrine of *Bhakti* from degenerating into a cloak for immora-

lity or sensuality. Its insistence on an active moral life, makes *Bhakti*, not an excuse for the neglect of daily duty and social obligations. In a world where one half lacks a common faith, the other half has a faith imposed on it, the only consolation is the rational religion of the *Gītā*.

### III

The Vedānta-sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa constitute one of the triple texts (*prasthānatraya*) of all the schools of vedānta. The sūtra literature is a very ancient literary mode and it is common to all the systems of philosophy in India. Its function is to reduce to the form of aphorisms and to present in a precise manner, the philosophical tenets of a system found scattered in a number of works. The sūtras are terse to the point of unintelligibility. They are concise to an excess. This gnomic nature of the sūtras renders them ununderstandable except with the aid of clear and elaborate commentaries. This has led to the writing of commentaries, subcommentaries and independent studies of the particular topics of a system (*prakaraṇas*).

It is laid down that the composition of the sūtras should satisfy a number of requirements. First among them is that the sūtras must use short words with few letters. The words must be clear and unambiguous. They must be full of significance. The principles of interpretation forged by the sūtras must be comprehensive and not have a narrow or limited field of application. Meaningless syllables used in vedic verses to satisfy the metrical requirements must be avoided in the sūtras. In short, they should not suffer from any defect, formal or material.

The vedānta sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa are called by



different names, *Brahma sūtras*, *Śārīraka sūtras*, *Uttara Mīmāṃsā sūtras*. Bādarāyaṇa is identified by the theistic schools of vedānta with one of the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu, i.e. the sage Vyāsa, the celebrated author of the Mahābhārata and the eighteen purāṇas. Others identify him as one of the ṛṣis of ancient India. The vedānta sūtras are five hundred and thirty-five in number according to the calculation of Śaṅkara. Madhva holds the view that the number is five hundred and sixty-four. The vedānta sūtras mark the second stage in the development of vedāntic thought. The first stage is the intuition of the seers set forth in the Upaniṣads. The conflicting statements of the various texts of the Upaniṣads are properly adjudged and unified in the vedānta sūtras. This is the second stage i.e., the stage of systematisation. The co-ordination of the several passages is effected through the subordination of them under a passage of primary importance. Hence it is called a *nirṇayaka śāstra*.

The third stage in the development of vedāntic thought is the writing of commentaries on the sūtras by the different system builders. The sūtras have been commented on by different *ācāryas*. Prominent among the commentaries are those of Śaṅkara, Bhāskara, Yādavaṇḍya, Rāmānuja, Keśava, Nilakaṇṭha, Madhva, Baladeva, Vallabha, Vijñānabhikṣu. The oldest of the commentaries is that of Śaṅkara. Its antiquity, its powers of argumentation, its metaphysical acumen and literary grace have all given it a unique status among the commentaries. It is at once a philosophical classic and a piece of great literature. The commentaries of Rāmānuja and Madhva interpret the sūtras in a theistic light. The commentary of Madhva effects the textual synthesis in a masterly manner. His commen-

tary has not that literary grace of Śaṅkara. In support of his position he quotes passages copiously from the vedas and purāṇas. In fact there are very few sentences of his own in Madhva's commentary. The cogent array of quotations from the vast field of purāṇa literature is an index of his sense of loyalty to the *śruti*. Rāmānuja's commentary is argumentative and is difficult reading. He gives us ample evidence of his logical skill. He points out that his commentary is not all his own and that in its main outline it is the resuscitation of a lost tradition. Such humility is evident throughout in his writings. Madhva holds that his interpretation is infallible on the ground that the Lord himself, the very composer of the sūtras, Vyāsa, taught him its meaning and approved of his commentary. Two distinct trends of interpretation of the sūtras are clearly discernible, the absolutistic interpretation and the theistic interpretation. The former is represented by Śaṅkara and the latter by Rāmānuja and Madhva.

The vedānta sūtras are divided into four chapters. The first deals with the harmonisation of the purport of the different vedic and secular words in respect of Brahman, i.e. the *Samanvaya adhyāya*. The second chapter refutes other *pramāṇas* that contradict the central purport of vedānta and examines the arguments of the different systems that are opposed to vedānta, *avirodha adhyāya*. The third chapter relates to the way of attaining Brahman, hence it is called *sādhana adhyāya*. The fourth deals about the nature of bliss i.e., Brahman-realisation, hence it is called *phala adhyāya*. The sūtras in each chapter are classified into *adhikaraṇas*. Every topic is termed an *adhikaraṇa*. Some contain one sūtra, others as many as ten.

Each *adhikaraṇa* refers to a particular scriptural passage which is called in technical parlance *viṣaya-vākya*.

Some modern scholars are of opinion that Bādarāyaṇa was one of the many systematisers of vedānta. Bādarāyaṇa himself mentions the names of Bādari, Kāśakṛtsna, Āśmarathya, Auḍulomi, and Jaimini. These seers differ among themselves on many important points. The nature of the released soul is described by Auḍulomi as characterised by thought (*caitanya*) and Jaimini holds the view that a number of other attributes too characterise the liberated soul. Bādarāyaṇa admits both the positions. With reference to the attainment of Brahman, Jaimini holds the view that the individual who worships the *Lower Brahman* does not attain the Higher *nirguṇa Brahman*. The sage Bādari takes exception to this view. Śaṅkara agrees with Bādari. In the determination of the relation between Brahman and the individual soul, sage Āśmarathya is of opinion that as between Brahman and the individual soul identity-in-difference (*bhedābheda*) persists. Auḍulomi is of opinion that the individual soul is different from Brahman till the time of release. Sage Kāśakṛtsna affirms the relation of identity between them. These facts point out that there were others differing from Bādarāyaṇa on many topics even while he composed the sūtras. It is interesting to note here that Madhva in his commentary reconciles all the views that are opposed to Bādarāyaṇa's standpoint. The different views expressed are treated as particular aspects of the large view of Vyāsa.

The first four sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa give us in brief the outlines of the vedānta philosophy. In the first sūtra the spiritual aspirant is exhorted to inquire into



the nature of Brahman. Brahman is defined in the second sūtra as the originator, sustainer, destroyer, etc., of the Universe. The third sūtra states that scripture is the *pramāṇa* in respect of the knowledge of Brahman. The fourth points out that all the terms in the scripture signify Brahman.

Before commenting straight on the first sūtra Śaṅkara gives us a short *prolegomena to metaphysics*, in his famous *adhyāsa bhāṣya*, which is an introduction to the vedānta sūtras in general and to the first sūtra in particular. According to Śaṅkara there is only one Reality, which is Knowledge, Bliss, and Infinitude. Besides this Reality there is nothing real. The Real and Brahman are one and the same. There is nothing besides it with which to describe it. Hence the impossibility in describing Brahman.

If Brahman is all that is Real, how is it that we see a world of plurality in its place? It is to explain this mystery that Śaṅkara wrote his *adhyāsa bhāṣya*. We human beings have a natural tendency to identify the inert with self and the self with the inert, e.g., the usage 'this is my house' etc. bears out this truth. We identify the *anātman* with the *ātman* and the *ātman* with the *anātman*. This reciprocal superimposition (*māyā*) sustains the world of plurality. This faculty or superimposition is called *avidyā*, i.e. nescience. It is beginningless, positive, and is attached to the individual soul. This faculty is responsible for the principle of individuation. This nescience suppresses Brahman and projects in its place the world of plurality. This is explained on the famous analogy of the individual delusively cognising the rope as the snake in twilight. The rope did not get transformed into the snake, it only appeared so. Likewise Brahman

appears as it were, many (*vivarta* and not *pariṇāma*) and does not really get transformed into the many. The world of plurality persists as long as nescience is there. The individual thinks that he is one of the many, suffering untold miseries. This is due to the functioning of nescience. Nescience can be removed only by knowledge, and the knowledge must be of that which is destructive of nescience. Hence, the necessity to know Brahman, the only Real. So the *sūtrakāra* exhorts the spiritual aspirant to inquire into Brahman, after systematic ethical discipline. Brahman knowledge will help us to destroy the nescience and realise that the individual ego is no other than Brahman when freed from its limitations.

If Brahman is to be known, he can only be known through his attributes. The second *sūtra* defines Brahman as the originator, sustainer and destroyer of this universe. This description apparently contradicts Śaṅkara's metaphysical position. Śaṅkara treats this account of the *sūtrakāra* as a description *per-accidence*. Hence Brahman is not in any literal sense the actual creator of the world. He is said to be the *abhinna-nimitto'pādāna kāraṇa* of the universe.

Nescience has to be destroyed through Brahman experience. Scripture is the ultimate authority in respect of Brahman. The third *sūtra* states that Brahman is the cause of the sacred scripture. Such great wisdom as the vedas contain could not have originated from any individual who is not omniscient. This *sūtra* is interpreted in another way. The scriptures are the *pramāṇas* through which we have mediate cognition of Brahman.

The fourth sūtra effects an harmonisation of all vedic terms with Brahman.

The theistic schools interpret the vedānta sūtras in an entirely different manner from that of Śaṅkara. The God of the sūtras is not an indeterminate entity that cannot be described in terms of any attribute. He is a suprapersonal being endowed with infinite powers and omniscience. He is referred to in the second sūtra as the creator and sustainer of this Universe. The world of plurality is not conceived by the theists as an illusory phenomenon or on the same level as dream experience. A real and an omnipotent God cannot by his very nature have created an illusory world. If the world of plurality is an illusory manifestation of the Lord, He is no better than a juggler who draws rabbits from his hat. The philosophical position, that the world of reality is an illusory manifestation, militates against the omnipotence of the Lord.

The theist criticises the view that the Lord described in the scriptures is not Brahman but the limited aspect of Brahman i.e. the personal God, *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* in *advaita* parlance is called *Saguṇa Brahman* and the indeterminable secondless reality is called *Para Brahman*. The Advaitin holds that all the attributes that speak of Brahman as creator, sustainer etc. of this Universe refer to the *Saguṇa Brahman*. According to some such an interpretation makes the august work of the *sūtrakāra* a juvenile production. "It is impossible to conceive that the sūtras should open with an imperative order asking the spiritual aspirant to enquire into the *Para Brahman*, and define in the very second sūtra the *Saguṇa Brahman*". The Advaitin's contention that Brahman is



indeterminable in terms of any word results in the futility of the *śāstras*. If it be contended that the *śāstras* signify the Lord in a secondary sense (*lakṣaṇāvṛtti*), the theist replies that it is impossible to imagine a secondary signification of a thing that cannot be described in terms of any word. In so far as no description of Brahman is given by the Advaitin it is equated with the *śūnya* of the Buddhist.

The theists criticise Śaṅkara's doctrine of *māyā* and point out that the author of the sūtra does not intend it all. It is stated in the sūtra *Jagadvyāpāra varjyam*, certain functions like the creation of the cosmos are denied to the released soul. They are said to be the inalienable functions of the Lord, distinguishing Him from the souls. Further, the description of the world as something other than the real and the unreal is said to violate the sound canons of logic. A thing is either real or unreal. There is no middle ground between the real and the unreal. Śaṅkara's introduction to his commentary on the vedānta sūtras is criticised as not being in tune with the sūtras. The concept of *mokṣa* explained in the sūtras does not admit of the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. The theists hold the view that anybody who reads Śaṅkara's commentary with open eyes, will see the liberties he has taken with sūtras, and the occasions on which he throws them overboard or tells us in parenthesis not to take them too seriously.

The theists contend that the sūtras are not in favour of the final merging of the individual in Brahman. Most of the sūtras speak of the difference of the Lord from Brahman. They have all been mostly interpreted by Śaṅkara as having difference for their purport. There is the significant sūtra in which Brahman

is declared to be the *one approached by all the released*. The general impression left by the sūtras is that they are theistic to the core. All the difficulties felt by the different ācāryas in their task of interpreting and reconciling the different passages arise out of an attempt to build a logical system of thought.

## Chapter VI

### ŚĀṆKARA'S ADVAITA

The system of Vedānta popularised by Śaṅkara is called the Advaita. True to the traditions of the Vedānta, Sri Śaṅkara declares that he has derived the doctrines of his system from the synthesis of the *triple texts*. The glory of this system is that it can stand the test of the most severe logic. Hence, it can be viewed as an independent system of philosophy, like those of Kant, Hegel and Plato. It is also possible to see in it the Indian version of the perennial philosophy advocated by the great mystics of the East and the West.

The initial authority for the doctrines of the Advaita Vedānta is the scripture. Purportful scripture alone is taken into account. The purport of a scriptural passage is determined by several marks of purport. Of the marks of purport, reason (*Upapatti*) is the most prominent one. The authority of the scripture is invoked not in respect of those facts that can be known from inference and perception. Where they fail, Scripture steps in. Scripture is not taken as authority in the determination of facts that can be known from other sources of knowledge. The Vedas describe the two great philosophical ideals *mokṣa* and *dharma* and the proper means to their realisation.

Reason is not ruled out completely. Nor is all reason declared indecisive. It can indicate probability and not demonstrate completely. The *Śāstras* are only *jñāpaka* and not *kāraṅkas*.

For an intellectual understanding of Advaita we need sharp understanding. It is not for the intellect-



tually indolent. The Advaitin believes that mere senses and reasons cannot exhaust Reality. To understand the spirit and realise it we need experience. Spiritual experience is the final authority in matters of religion. It is not occult vision or physical ecstasy. Spiritual experience transcends the intellect, but is not contra-intellectual. It is not an instinct. Henri Poincare observes: "Logic alone is not enough, the science of demonstration is not the whole of science and that of intuition must still act as a complement, I must almost say, as a counter weight or antidote to Logic."

Śaṅkara explains his doctrines with the help of logical reason. He sets forth to explain in terms of logic, what he has spiritually experienced himself. Spiritual experience, *anubhūti*, is the supreme authority. That type of reasoning which nullifies what is taught by scripture is declared invalid. We find the Spirit by experience and explain it with the help of logic.

The doctrines of Advaita Vedānta can be briefly stated in a few propositions: (1) Brahman is Reality; (2) The World has apparent reality (*mīthyā*); (3) The soul is non-different from Brahman.

Śaṅkara is a Monist. He believes and posits the reality of only one category. He calls that entity Brahman. There is nothing besides Brahman. All that is, is Brahman. It has no second to it. The Absolute is non-dual. Śaṅkara seeks to establish the nature of Brahman on the authority of *Śruti* and Logic. In the words of William James, Śaṅkara's system is "the paragon of all monistic systems."

Reality is Brahman. "It alone was in the beginning," say the Upaniṣads. It is not related to anything

for there is nothing else to relate it with. It is a homogeneous non-composite spirit. It is devoid of all internal and external relations. It is *Śuddha caitanya*. There is nothing like it. Nor is there anything real other than it. Śaṅkara's Brahman is not *brute-matter*. It is not a substance but is the spirit. It is not a personality with eyes and hands. It is not a system with several parts rich in content like the Absolute of Hegel. Nor is it an organism with several limbs working in co-operation to keep the organism fit.

It is not an object of thought. It is Perfection, Reality and Existence. It cannot be defined in terms of any categories, for there is nothing beside it. It is not the result or product of any activity. It is self-caused and the root cause of all. It is an absolute contrast to, and is fundamentally different from, things that are. It can only be expressed negatively in terms of what it is not.

Here are a few Upaniṣadic descriptions of Brahman. In a celebrated passage the *Māṇḍukya* describes Brahman, "It is unseen, incapable of being spoken of, ungraspable, without any distinctive marks, unthinkable, unnameable, the essence of the knowledge of oneself, that into which the World is resolved, the peaceful, the benign and the non-dual."

In another passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, Yājñavalkya describes Brahman to his persevering pupil Gārgi, "That which the Brāhmanas call the imperishable *akṣara* is not gross, not fine, not short, not long, not glowing, not adhesive, without shadow, without darkness, without air, without space, without stickiness, odourless, tasteless, without eye, without ear, without voice, without wind, without energy, without mouth, without breath, without personal or family

name, unageing and undying, without fear, immortal, stainless and not uncovered, not covered, without measure, without inside and without outside." Śaṅkara's Brahman is beyond the sphere of all predications. It cannot be truly designated in positive terms.<sup>1</sup>

The negative description of Brahman is not the result of Śaṅkara's caprice or whim. There are certain logical difficulties in the attempt to describe Brahman in positive terms. It is these difficulties that make Śaṅkara stick to the negative description of Brahman.

The logical difficulties are many. To describe a thing is to relate it with something other than itself. In the case of Brahman there is nothing besides it to relate it with. Further, description presupposes some measure in terms of which we describe a thing. Brahman is the measure of all. It is the Reality and ground of all things. We cannot measure the measure itself. We cannot light the candle to see the sun. We can only describe Brahman as not this, as not that. Being the basis of all things, it cannot be described. In a memorable passage the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* describes the difficulties. "For where there is duality as it were, there one smells another, there one speaks to another, there one thinks of another, there one understands another." . . . . "Where verily, everything has become the self, then, by what and whom should one see, then by what and whom should one hear, then by what and whom should one speak, then by what and whom should one understand?" . . . . "By what should one know that by which all this is known? By what, my dear, should one know the knower?"

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1. Eckhart cried out, "Wouldst Thou be Perfect, do not yelp about God." The Tao says, "Cease holding opinions about It."



Brahman is not an object of knowledge. The logic of definition is beset with difficulties. The attempt to define Brahman lands us in contradictions. Definition is a form of relation. It presupposes three factors, the two relata and the relationing process. The predicate of a proposition is supposed to say something about the subject by relating itself to it. Several factors are brought to our notice. There is the question, whether the predicate is different from the subject or not. If it is identical and non-different from the subject, it fails to serve its purpose. If it is something different, it ascribes to the subject what it is not. The difficulty does not end there.

The nature of relationing which connects the subject to the predicate is discrepant. The question—is relation a quality, separate from the subject and predicate, or not—is not easy to answer without involving ourselves in contradictions. If it is not a separate quality, it is identical; then it cannot connect the subject and the predicate. It fails in its purpose of relationing. If it is regarded as a separate quality, it needs in its turn another relation to relate it with, that in its turn requires another. Thus, the process ends in *infinite regress*. If it be contended that there is no need for connection between the subject and the predicate at all, then the category of relation becomes superfluous. Relation is the most important form for the functioning of all logical categories e.g., Substance and Attribute, Cause and Effect, Agent and Action. Without the category of relation, they do not become intelligible. On sharp analysis, the category of relation turns out to be self-discrepant. All descriptions presuppose relation and its work.

Thought cannot work without the scheme of relation. The relational way of knowing things cannot give us the knowledge of Brahman. Relational knowledge can only give us the appearance of things. Relational knowledge helps us to know about a thing and not the thing as such. It is mediate knowledge and not realisation of the nature of a thing. Bradley clinches the issue about the nature of relations and writes, "The conclusion to which I am brought is that a relational way of thought—and one that moves by the machinery of terms and relations—must give *appearance* and not *truth*. It is a makeshift, a device, a mere practical compromise, most necessary but in the end most indefensible."

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Brahman is above all relational ways of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> It is an impersonal transcendent Being that is unthinkable in terms of predicates. It is the seer of objects. The sights are many, but the seer is one. It has no genus (*jāti*), no quality (*guṇa*). It is not a product (*kriyā*). It is above all relational ways of thinking. It is pure consciousness. It is eternal and does not suffer any changes (*vikāra*). It is not an existent. It is existence itself. Not being limited by any objects, it is infinite. It is identical with the self of all beings. It is neither a substance with the quality of consciousness, nor is it an ever-changing stream of consciousness. It is not even a subject of consciousness related to its object. It is pure consciousness, it is neither a subject nor an object, not even the unity of the subject and the object. It is an unchanging indeterminate and subject-objectless consciousness.

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2. Eckhart writes: "God is unlike to anything and like to nothing. He is above being. He is naught." "God is Being itself, without a second, unchangeable, without quality, without form, neither this nor that."

Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* writes that when Bahva was asked by Bakṣita to expound the nature of Brahman he kept silent. He prayed again, 'teach me sir.' The teacher kept silent, and when pressed a second and a third time he said, "I am teaching you, you do not follow. The self is silent." The Upaniṣad declares that words and mind returned back not attaining Brahman. They declare that Brahman is not attainable through discursive thought.

"Outside the spirit there is not and there cannot be any Reality and the more anything is spiritual, so much more it is veritably real." To say that Brahman cannot be described does not mean that it does not exist. It is not non-existence. It can be known indirectly and realised directly through spiritual experience. The negative description of Brahman has irritated the critics of Śaṅkara at home and abroad. They equate Śaṅkara's Brahman with absolute Non-existence. They declare with Hegel and the Nyāya school that pure being is no being at all. Śaṅkara knew his critics well in advance. He has remarked in his commentary on the *Chāndogya* that Brahman which is bereft of space, time, quality, genus, fruit, etc. and of all differences, is the secondless Reality. It appears as absolute nothing to men of feeble intellect (*manda buddhi*). Śaṅkara's Brahman is self-luminous, unconditional existence, unexcellable bliss. It is the Reality of the world. It is the *real* of all *reals*.

Though Śaṅkara does not believe that Brahman can be known by the instruments of knowledge, still he does not leave us without sufficient methods for understanding the nature of Brahman. He formulates two types of definitions called *Svarūpa lakṣana* and *Taṭasthalakṣana*. The first definition states the essen-



tial nature of Brahman. Brahman is described as Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss (*Sat cit* and *ānanda*). These are not so much qualities of Brahman as his nature. The description has to be negatively interpreted. Brahman is not unreality, ignorance, and sorrow. They have to be interpreted in the light of an appositional construction, then, they mean Brahman that is Knowledge, Brahman that is Existence and Brahman that is Bliss. There is no distinction between the quality and substance in Brahman. The three qualities, *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda* are not distinct.

Brahman is described indirectly by scriptures. In fact, strict students of the Advaita school believe that all descriptions are forms of indirect knowledge.

*Tatasthalakṣana* demarcates an object from the rest by indicating some accidental qualifications. For example, we may indicate a particular house to a stranger who is in search of it by pointing out to the crow that is perching on the roof. The crow is not an essential characteristic of the house. It only serves to distinguish the object while not being originally related to the defined object. Śaṅkara takes many of the scriptural statements in this light.

The concept of Existence and its relation to Reality is conceived by the Western philosophers differently from that of Śaṅkara. By Reality the idealist philosophers like Bradley mean that which is free from contradiction and is a self-consistent whole. By existence they mean that which is and is self-contradictory. Existence is self-contradictory. Reality is above it. "Existence is not Reality, and Existence is the appearance of the Real. For Śaṅkara Reality must Exist...Existence is in other words a form of Reality."

Śaṅkara accepts the Reality of Brahman as a working hypothesis on the authority of the *Śruti* at the first instance. The *Gītā* clinches the issue in a well-known verse, "Of the Real there is no Non-existence and of the Unreal no Existence." What is posited on the authority of the *śruti* is explained through logic and affirmed by spiritual experience.

The central problem of philosophy is to explain the relation between the One and the Many, in terms of human reason, to the satisfaction of man's intelligence. Śaṅkara posits the reality of Brahman and has to explain the world of matter and the world of souls in terms of it. In fact, he has to explain the relation between the pluralistic Universe of souls and Matter to Brahman. He holds that the pluralistic Universe is the appearance of Brahman.

The indeterminable nature of Brahman is the big stumbling block in the process of explanation. Śaṅkara cannot adopt the theist's creationist hypothesis to explain the emergence of the world of matter and of souls as in Christianity or Islam. The conception of creation requires an agent, a purpose and a material cause to create with. All these are not provided for in the scheme of Advaita metaphysics.

The creationist hypothesis is based on the law of causation. The law of causation involves a relation between cause and effect. Analysis reveals that the logical category of cause is self-discrepant. The nerve of the argument is as follows: Is the effect different from the cause, or is it not? If it is not different, then there is no meaning in calling it a cause; if it is different, it needs a relation to connect it. We have already seen and shown, that the category of relation though

very useful is in the end logically indefensible. Hence, Śaṅkara did not accept the creationist theory.

The Nyāya school holds to this theory. They declare that the Lord creates the world of things from Atoms (*paramāṇus*). The concept of atoms is not free from contradictions. They declare that, to begin with, Atoms are of no magnitude. When two atoms are combined, they hold that magnitude is present. One fails to see how what is originally without any magnitude can produce magnitude by merely combining with other atoms.

Further, the Nyāya God is described as devoid of any activity. Activity presupposes some connection with matter. It is difficult to envisage any type of relation between the atoms and God. The relation cannot be conjunction, for both matter and God are infinite. Infinite substances cannot be connected. If inherence (*samavāya*) is said to be the relation, there is the doubt, *which* inheres in what. Nor can we see any purpose in the Lord's creation. The problem of Evil has been the most difficult pill for the atheist to swallow. If it is argued that the Lord creates the things of the world according to *karma* of the individuals, there is the difficulty of the supremacy of *karma*. From the supremacy of *karma* to the superfluity of the Lord is an easy step. The problem of Evil and the mad and monstrous contrasts in life cannot exempt the Lord from responsibility if he is its sole creator. To admit that the Lord has purpose in creation is to convict him of imperfection. He is said to be perfect and free from all wants. He has no desires or unfulfilled purposes to achieve. Activity is a mark of imperfect souls. So it cannot be attributed to the Lord without whittling down His perfection and glory.



When we examine the creationist hypothesis we come to grips with the difficulties of the concept of causation. Causation is the central category of science and logic. It is the soul of all investigation. In fact, all science is the investigation of the cause of the things. The Nyāya school is true to its pluralistic metaphysics in looking upon cause and effect as two different things. They regard the relation between cause and effect as mechanical. No two things are alike for them. They are radical pluralists. They argue that if cause and effect are not two different things, we need not call them by distinct names. Further, one who wants the pot is not satisfied with the clay or one who wants cloth is not satisfied with thread. The pragmatic test points to the difference. The effect is a new product; it is a *de novo* creation. It was not in existence before its production. It has come into being as a new creation from its prior non-existence. This doctrine is called *Ārambha-vāda*.

The Nyāya view of the cause-effect relation is mechanical. They regard change as a total process and the essence of the cause is change. They ignore the connection element which is the essence of causation. Cause is not intelligible except in the background of an identity. Absolute difference is not intelligible except in the background of identity. All difference is difference-in-identity. Causation is identity-in-difference.

The Sāṅkhya theory of causation is organic. It is a step in advance of the Nyāya view. They regard that causation is the manifestation of what is latent into an active operation. The effect is already found in the cause in the potential form. They hold that change is understandable only in the light of an unchanging

element. They oppose the Nyāya school and hold that cause and effect are related states and not distinct things. They criticise the Nyāya view severely. If a thing can be produced *de novo* from non-existence, it amounts to saying that anything can be produced from anything. Such a conclusion is contrary to and falsified by human experience. It will be impossible to determine any relation between cause and effect if the effect is absolutely a new entity. How could a cause be related to a non-existent effect? Relation can only exist between two existents and not between one existent and another non-existent. Further, in our life and experience, we always seek an appropriate cause for an appropriate effect. He who wants curds seeks milk and not water. He who wants oil seeks seeds and not sands. The cause itself gets transformed into the effect. This transformation is effected by the causal operation. What is potentially present is manifested. The effect, though existent in the cause, is still in an unmanifest form prior to the causal operation. The causal operation takes on two forms. It removes the obstruction to reach an object like the lamp revealing the post in the dark. It gives also new shape.

The Sāṅkhya theory is closest to the theory advocated by the Advaitins. It is the preface to Śaṅkara's theory of causation. It is the *Pūrva Bhūmi* to *Vivarta Vāda*. A little analysis lays bare the self-discrepancy involved in the concept of cause and change. The Advaitin brings out the discrepancy in the concept of change and causation in his dialectics.

The concept of change is as old as the concept of permanence. Let us take an example of the concept of change.

A the cause, becomes B the effect. If they are identical there is no becoming. If they are absolutely different, we cannot call them cause and effect or the changed object. If change is regarded as partly identical and partly different, the difficulty is not overcome. This fares no better at the hands of the resourceful Advaitin. In so far as the identity element is concerned, there is no becoming; in so far as they are different, there is no relation possible between them. The concept of identity-in-difference is self-discrepant. Though in life the concept of identity-in-difference is accepted, it cannot be logically sustained. The mere fact of their being together is not the guarantee of their validity. Śaṅkara declares that the identical is that which does not change. And yet change must be of the identical. That is the paradox of causation. The cause and effect are identical, now appearing as cause and now as effect. Identity is a basic concept. Difference presupposes it. Identity does not pre-suppose difference.

In the light of the Advaita theory of causation we can see Śaṅkara's difficulties in not accepting the creationist hypothesis and the transformation hypothesis put forward by the Nyāya and the Sāṅkhya systems of philosophy respectively.

Brahman neither creates the world nor is he transformed into the world. Brahman is an impartite (*akhaṇḍa*) entity. He cannot be transformed into anything. He is immutable, *aparīṇāmi* and *kūṭastha*. The Prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya school cannot account for the world. There are several difficulties in accounting for the evolution of the world, the liberation of Puruṣa, the gradation of the 23 evolutes, the bondage of the Puruṣa, and the cessation of the evolution etc. The Sāṅkhya



arguments are mostly analogies highly fanciful and romantic. They do not stand the test of logic.

If Brahman is to be transformed into the world of things, we are up against a number of difficulties. In the process of transformation, Brahman perforce has to experience all the imperfections of the world. Such a contingency goes against the perfection and the glory of God. God and the World will become identical. God minus the World will be zero. Such an account will make Advaita a variety of pantheism. If it be contended that God is immanent and transcendent and that a part of God gets transformed into the world and another part remains unchanged the position becomes open to all the previous questions directed against the concept of God. A clever Advaitin compares such an answer to the act of one who takes one half of a fowl for cooking and the other for laying eggs. It is the innumerable difficulties of *Ārambha Vāda* and *Pariṇāma Vāda*, that led Śaṅkara to formulate his famous *Vivarta Vāda*.

The Advaita theory of causation is called the *Vivarta Vāda*. It has striking resemblance to *Pariṇāma Vāda* and has also its own distinctness. The cause and the effect alike are real according to Sāṅkhya. They both belong to the same order of Reality. According to Advaita, cause and effect belong to two different orders of Reality. Brahman is the cause of all things. The world of things and souls do not have an independent existence. They have for their cause Brahman. Brahman is the reality of the world. Brahman cannot be the efficient cause of the world, for there is nothing beside it, which can be moulded into form. Brahman being an unchanging principle cannot undergo transformations. Yet Brahman is the cause of all things.

*Vivarta Vāda* explains the unique relation between the world and Brahman. The cause is independent of the effect. But the effect is dependent on the cause. The cause suffers nothing by the faults, foibles, and taints of its effect. The cause appears as the effect. Brahman appears as the world of matter and souls. Śaṅkara observes in his commentary on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* that "the multiplicity of creatures existing under name and form when viewed as self-dependent is not true, but when viewed as having the Real as its substrata it is true" (*sadātmanāeva satyam, svatastu anṛtam*). The effect has no organic relatedness to the cause. Vācaspati, the great commentator of Śaṅkara, clinches the issue in precise logical terms. The effect is asserted to be non-different from the cause (*tadananya*). When the *Vedānta sūtra* declares that the cause Brahman is non-different from the effect i.e., the world, we must clearly understand the implications of the description. It means that Brahman is the ground of the world. If there is no Brahman, there is no world. The non-existence of the world will not affect Brahman in any way. There is the invariable negative concomitant relation (*Vyatiraka Vyāpti*) between the non-existence of Brahman and the non-existence of the world. When Śaṅkara asserts non-difference between Brahman and the world, he does not mean identity but he only negates the otherness. What is aimed at, in this way of describing the causal relation, is the denial of the reality to the effect apart from the cause.

The effect and the cause differ in several respects. The effect is particular, finite, inert; the cause is infinite, eternal and of the nature of consciousness. The effect falls short of Reality and is not absolute

unreality. It is not real. If it were real it would have independent Reality. It is not unreal for it is cognised by us. We live and have our being in it. It cannot be real and unreal at the same time for such a position violates the Law of contradiction.

*Vivarta Vāda* is a one-sided type of causal relation envisaged by Śaṅkara to explain the connection between Brahman and all other things. It is a relation between Brahman and its appearances. The ground of the appearance is Brahman. Brahman appears as the world, soul and Īśvara. These appearances are due to the working of Māyā. The doctrine of Māyā is the explanation for the world appearance.

Next to Brahman, the doctrine of Māyā occupies the central place in Advaita Metaphysics. Māyā is responsible for all the appearances of Brahman. Besides Brahman, Śaṅkara accepts Māyā as another philosophical category.

Māyā is a quality which is found only in sentient beings. It is a *cetana dharma* and is found only in souls. It is a type of ignorance, that is beginningless. It requires a locus and a content. Ignorance must belong to some and must be of something. Its locus is soul. It has a positive nature. Though it is beginningless, yet it is not eternal like Brahman. It is destroyed at the time of Brahman realisation.

The function of Māyā is two-fold. It suppresses and conceals the real nature of the object and shows up in its place some other object. These two powers of Māyā are respectively called *āvaraṇa* and *vikṣepa*. It conceals Brahman and shows up in its place the universe and world of souls. It not only makes us not apprehend Brahman, but creates some other thing in its place. It projects something in the place it conceals.



Hence, it is considered as a positive substance (*bhāva rūpa*).

The functioning of Māyā makes the Absolute appear as the empirical world. The world is empirical; Brahman is real. We must grasp the correct significance of the term Māyā for properly understanding the philosophy of Śaṅkara. Professor Hiriyanna observes that "the unity of the Absolute of Brahman may be compared to the unity of a painting, say, of a landscape. Looked at as a landscape, it is a plurality; hill, valley, lake and streams; but its ground, the substance of which it is constituted is one, viz., the canvas. It is rarely that analogies in philosophy admit of extension, but this one does, in one particular. The canvas appears not only as hill, a valley and a stream, but also as the garment of the shepherd that may be figured on it. Similarly, the Absolute which is of the essence of sentience, manifests itself not only as insentient objects but also as sentient subjects."

Māyā before it functions, being a *cetana dharma*, requires a locus as well as a content. If we say that the locus of Māyā is the *jīva* and the content is Brahman, there is the question as to how, prior to the functioning of Māyā, there are *jīvas* (souls). Without the existence of souls there will be no *loci* for Māyā. Thus there is the defect of reciprocal dependence i.e., for Māyā to function we require the existence of souls, and for the existence of souls there is the necessity for the functioning of Māyā. To avoid this defect the Advaitin declares that Māyā is beginningless. Māyā is existent but not Real like Brahman. It is not eternal. It is not coeval with Brahman. It is destroyed by Brahman realisation. So there are no two ultimate categories in Advaita. Brahman is both *sat* and positive.

Māyā is positive but not *sat*. The positive nature of Māyā indicates that it is *objective* and not *real*.

The locus of Māyā is described differently by the different Advaita thinkers. Some hold that Brahman itself is the locus and also the content of Māyā (*āśraya* and *viśaya*). This view regards that all is pure and simple illusion, that things exist only when they are perceived and dissolve into nothing as soon as we cease to perceive them. This school of thought has not the sanction of Advaita tradition. Further, Brahman is described in scriptures as pure and so it cannot become the locus of Māyā which is impurity i.e. ignorance. Ignorance cannot be attributed to Brahman.

Scripture declares that there are two types of souls, bound and the released. The theory of one soul goes against the scriptural declaration of many souls. Śaṅkara's view is that the individual soul is the locus of Māyā. Ignorance is in us. Its content is Brahman. With the onset of Brahman-knowledge, Māyā is destroyed in us. If *Caitra* drinks the poison *Maitra* does not die. For world appearance Brahman and Māyā are the causes.

Some regard Brahman as the material cause for the world, for there is no other second entity. The followers of the Vivaraṇa school hold that Brahman associated with Māyā is the cause of the world. A third view maintains that the world is the *pariṇāma* of Māyā and the *vivarta* of Brahman.

Śaṅkara in his description of Reality envisages a distinction between three stages of existence. The first is the *Pāramārthika* state. It is the absolutely real state. It is never sublated. The second state is *Vyāvahārika* state. It is objective, positive but not ultimately real. It is relatively real. The world of nature belongs

to it. The third state is called *Prātibhāsika* state. The world of dreams and illusion covers this state. All the three states of existence differ in their degrees of reality. The first alone is absolutely real and the other two are relatively real. There is a core of realism in the logic of Śaṅkara. He never dissolves the things of the world into ideas as the *Vijñāna vāda* school of Buddhism. He accords reality to the objects of knowledge and grades them. Among the objects of the world some are absolutely real. They are *sat*. Some are absolutely unreal. They are *asat* e.g., barren woman's son, sky-lotus. Yet other things are real and unreal.

The world of object is declared by Śaṅkara to be *mithyā*. It does not mean that the world is absolutely unreal like the horn of a hare or a sky-lotus. *Māyā-vāda* is not *asat vāda*. The critics of *Māyā-vāda* are legion. They hold that there is no middle ground between the Real and the Unreal. For them what is other than the Real is Unreal. When Śaṅkara declares the world as *mithyā* he means that it is different from the Real and also different from the Unreal. It is not Real because it is not eternal or perfect like Brahman. It is not Unreal because it is cognised. It is not Real and Unreal at the same time. Such a position violates the law of contradiction. Śaṅkara describes the world as indeterminable in terms of the Real and the Unreal. It is *anirvacanīya*.

When the world is described as *mithyā* it does not mean that it is non-existent and has no worth in it. In fact, all qualities and action belong to the world of nature. The law of causation and karma, hold good only in the world. The concepts do not apply to Brahman. "Causal rigidity in the empirical world is



consistent with its denial in the transcendental realm." In fact, the world is the training ground for the art of soul making. It is the place where we work for our moral and metaphysical desires. The world is not categorisable as Real or Unreal.

It is difficult to give an intellectually satisfactory account of the doctrine of Māyā. The Advaitin himself admits that there is a core of unintelligibility associated with the doctrine. With remarkable clarity Śaṅkara explains the nature and the working of Māyā in his celebrated *Adhyāsa Bhāṣya*. He writes, Māyā is coeval with life. We do not know how or when we got into it. Nobody walks into an illusion consciously. We can only know how to get out of it. It is the result of a false identification of the Real and the Unreal. It may be asked as to how it is possible to identify the Real, which is Perfect, Infinite, and Bliss, with the temporal, the finite and the imperfect. How is it possible to mistake light for darkness? In spite of all these questions, Śaṅkara points out with great persuasive skill and a charm of style that the confusion between the self and the not-self is in the very nature of man's experience. It is *svābhāvika* and *naisargika*. When the body is ill or well, one says, 'I am ill or well'; when the body lacks the sense of sight or hearing, one says, 'I am blind or deaf.' We know too well that the senses are material and belong to the category of the not-self. Still we identify ourselves with them.

Śaṅkara further argues that without Māyā no human activity is possible. All intellectual, religious, moral and social activities presuppose Māyā. Unless one identifies oneself with the sense organs, one cannot become the knowing subject. He must think that the eyes through which he sees are his. Everyone

of our activities is the work of Māyā. Swāmi Vivekānanda has put the whole issue in very simple language. "Māyā is a simple statement of facts, it is what we are and what is around us."

Post-Śaṅkara thinkers like Vācaspati, Citsukha, Śrīharṣa, Madhusūdana and Appayya have laboured very hard to establish with the help of pure logic the doctrine of Māyā. They have tried to establish with the help of inference the nature of Māyā. The dialectics of Post-Śaṅkara thought is a glorious chapter in Indian Logic. It can regale the most ardent lover of metaphysics and also at times baffle the expert. In point of comparison, they do not compare unfavourably with the dialectics of Hegel, Bradley, Plato, Kant and others.

The doctrine of Māyā is opposed by the Realists with the dilemma: "If Māyā is real, then there is a second Reality. If it is not real, then the world cannot be unreal." The Advaitin's answer is very simple. He does not admit the ultimate reality of Māyā. He admits that in the ultimate analysis there is a core of unintelligibility in the doctrine of Māyā. Śaṅkara suspends judgment about the nature of the world. He does not recklessly repudiate without evidence. By the very use of the logical categories, Śaṅkara builds his powerful opposition to Nyāya. The great lesson of Advaita logic is that it exposes the clay-footed nature of Nyāya logic. In the words of Rangarāja, "The Advaitin is not out to demonstrate this or that position. He points out that every other position held by the opponent is untenable. The positive definitions and proofs attempted by Advaitins are only a concession to the dualistic mode of expression."

But this does not mean that Śaṅkara ends his philosophy on a sceptical note. He did not despair. He believed in the existence of Brahman. Prof. S. Suryanarayana Sastry describes that Śaṅkara's scepticism is of a more rational type than the one to which Bradley subscribed. Bradley writes, "I mean by scepticism the mere denial of any known satisfactory doctrine, together with the personal despair of any future attainment." Śaṅkara is a *Brahmavādin* and not a sceptic or an agnostic.

The doctrine of Māyā appears to some as a veiled confession of one's inability to describe the nature of the world and its relation to Brahman. But such an inability is inherent in human knowledge. Prof. A. N. Whitehead observes, "It is no doubt true that curiosity is the craving of reason that the facts discriminated in experience be understood. It means the refusal to be satisfied with the bare welter of facts."

The mystery element in the world is not anything that discredits the intelligence of man. In a grand description Prof. Bradley has indicated the truth of it. He says that "to show how and why the universe is so, that finite existence belongs to it, is utterly impossible; that would imply the understanding of the whole, not practicable for a part." Again in the words of Whitehead, "All effort of human thought only dimly discerns it, misdescribes and wrongly associates things." It is interesting to note that Bertrand Russell concludes his volume, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Its Limits* with an observation that is highly relevant to our context. "All human knowledge is uncertain, inexact and partial. To this doctrine we have not found any limitation whatever. It is only an examined life that leaves no wonder to us. A completely rational explana-



tion of the world is not within the scope of man's intellect."

Closely allied with the doctrine of Māyā is the nature of the world we live in. Ignorant critics declare that Śaṅkara is an illusionist and that the world according to him is a dream and a delusion. They make Śaṅkara a mentalist who regards the world as a series of ideas. Nothing is farther from truth than this accusation of Śaṅkara. The world is not an empty dream nor is it a delirium. It is not a bundle of ideas with no substance behind it. *Māyāvāda* is not solipsism. Śaṅkara is opposed to *Vijñāna Vāda*, i.e. mentalism. There is a strong realistic element in Śaṅkara's theory of Knowledge. He analyses knowledge into two parts: (1) the physical adjunct i.e., *Antaḥkaraṇa* and (2) the awareness element i.e. *Sākṣin* which is psychical in its nature. All knowledge points to an object external to itself as it does to a subject. There is no knowledge which does not imply this double reference.

The world of object is not to be treated as a dream. It is objective: it is not the creation of the individual's fancy. It has a common objective reference. It is *the world* and not *worlds*.

The world of objects is not on par with dreams. The dream world is private and personal. The world of experience is public, and has an objective reference. It also satisfies the pragmatic test. All of us refer to the world as "the world." If it is contended that it is a collective illusion shared by all of us, we have only to say that it is more than a dream. The objects of the world are not our creations. We cannot choose or argue away their existence. The world is not a shadow-show nor an unreal phantasmagoria. We live in

the world and undertake our spiritual quest here. *Samsāra* is not a barren place. "It gives us a succession of spiritual opportunities to realise the best in us" in the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan. "Unreal the world is; illusory it is not."

Some critics regard that the doctrine of *Māyā* is not found in the Upaniṣads and is the creation of Śaṅkara. Prof. Ranade answers the critics with a wise observation: "The doctrine of *Māyā* is neither a fabrication of Śaṅkara nor merely the outcome of Buddhistic nihilism nor found full-fledged in the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads felt the mystery of creation. They saw that the world cannot be real at the level of Brahman. And what they felt and saw, they expressed in their own way. Their ideas are given a systematic form by Śaṅkara and his followers. But on one point all the Upaniṣads are almost unanimous, namely, that ultimate Reality is of the nature of consciousness."

The concept of *Māyā* has great significance. It is the material cause of the world in conjunction with *Īśvara*. It enjoys the same function as that of the *prakṛti* of the Sāṅkhya school. Dr. Radhakrishnan sums up the significance of the term *Māyā* as follows: (a) The world is not self-explanatory; it shows its phenomenal character. This is signified by the term *Māyā*. (b) The incomprehensibility of the relation between ultimate reality and the world of plurality is signified by the term *Māyā*. (c) It is the power through which Brahman manifests as *Īśvara*. The significance of the term *Māyā* is very wide; it is responsible for all creation. Brahman is regarded as the material and efficient cause of the world.

The efficient cause is non-different from the material cause. Brahman is the *abhinna-nimitto'pādāna*

*kāraṇa* of the world. Primal nature by itself cannot create the world nor can matter conform to activity when there is no sentient being guiding its activity. So the world is the result of *Māyā* and Brahman. It is not the creation of the individual soul or of his dream.

Let us advert to the consideration of the nature of the soul. In Advaita the souls are many in their appearance. They are appearances of Brahman. The status of the soul is on a higher level than that of the world of matter. It has a special status. There are three different views put forward by Advaita thinkers about the nature of the relation between the soul and Brahman. Some are of opinion that Brahman as reflected in *Māyā* appears as *Īśvara* and Brahman as reflected in *avidyā* appears as the soul (*jīva*). This view is called *ābhāsavāda* advocated by Sureśvarācārya.

The second view is called *pratibimbavāda* or the reflection theory. This theory holds that *Īśvara* is the reflection of Brahman in *Māyā* and that the soul (*jīva*) is the reflection of Brahman in *avidyā*.

The third view is called *avacchedavāda*. This is the limitation view. This school finds it difficult to accept the reflection theory; for, how can a formless Brahman be reflected in *Māyā*? So they hold that when *Māyā* conditions and limits Brahman, the *jīva* appears. The *jīva* is the locus of *Māyā* and *Īśvara* its content. The content is in no way affected by *Māyā*. There are various ways of looking at the relation between the Brahman and the soul.

Śaṅkara's conception of the soul is unique. It is not a simple substance. It is a complex of the *sākṣin* and *antaḥkaraṇa*. These two elements with the



co-operation of the senses function in the waking life. In dream experience the *sākṣin* and the *antaḥkāraṇa* are there, but there is not the co-operation of the sense organs. But there is only the sense of immediacy and new creation.

In the state of deep sleep the *sākṣin* alone exists with its *avidyā*. The *antaḥkāraṇa* is merged in the *avidyā*. In this state there is the concealment of the one but not the projection of the many. Individuality still persists. After waking up we are able to recollect the experience of the happiness of the sleep.

The souls are not many. The empirical egos are many. The transcendental self is one. Atman is for all (*ātmā sarvasya ātmā*). In its essence it is Brahman. It is not different from Brahman. Creatureliness, finitude, ignorance and misery are only the conditioned state and not the permanent nature of man. They are adventitious and not native to the soul. Man is not a fallen creature tied to a body of lust and sin with no glimmer of divinity in him. He is divinity concealed. He is of the same substance as of Brahman. Śaṅkara's doctrine of the consubstantiality of man and God is unique. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." The *Chandogya Upaniṣad* repeats that man and God are identical in essence. Śvetaketu is instructed about this final truth by his father a number of times, "That which is the subtle essence, this whole world has for itself. That is the true, That is the self. *That art thou Śvetaketu*". Spinoza said, "We feel and know that we are eternal." The divinity of man is one of the fundamental doctrines of Śaṅkara.

Prof. Hiriyanna in his *Essentials of Indian Philosophy* brings out the difference between the soul and the world. He observes that at the moment of Brah-

man-realisation the world is negated completely, whereas the soul is not negated but only its finitude, separateness, ignorance, misery etc., are destroyed. Hence, the soul is on a higher level than the world in its relation to Brahman. We are all as it were in an egg. The senses are bad witnesses. They hide the Real from us. Man is a many-levelled being. The innermost core of his life is his Self and it is one with Brahman. The identity between the individual soul and Brahman is not apparent but is real. Hence, the need for moral effort and spiritual meditation.

The personal God of Śaṅkara is called the Īśvara. It is a very important concept and has to be carefully understood. There is a good deal of misunderstanding and uninformed criticism about Śaṅkara's God. The Īśvara of Śaṅkara and the souls are not on the same level. Īśvara is the appearance of Brahman in Māyā. He is not affected by Māyā. Ignorant critics argue that Śaṅkara's Īśvara is not as real as the Brahman and so need not be worshipped. Tradition holds a different opinion. They believe that the worship of Īśvara is necessary for Brahman-realisation. Yet others are of the opinion that the concept of God in Advaita is a concession to the masses who are not competent to contemplate the impersonal absolute.

The criticism against the concept of Īśvara has to be understood with great caution. Advaita tradition and practice have accorded a very important place to Īśvara. While it is true that the Absolute alone is the ultimate Reality and not Īśvara or souls, it should not make us forget that the individual souls differ from God.

Śaṅkara's God is not a second metaphysical category. There are no two or multiples of Brahman in

Advaita. The existence of Īśvara is assumed on the authority of scriptures. Īśvara is Brahman in relation to the world. Brahman that transcends the world is impersonal (*nirguṇa*). Śaṅkara does not admit that primal matter of Prakṛti can be the cause of the world. Māyā is the power of Īśvara and is his energy. He is the energiser. There is non-difference between Śakti and Śaktimat. Brahman is non-different from Īśvara.

There are distinctions between Īśvara and the Soul. The Jīva i.e. the soul is only the enjoyer of the world and not its creator. Īśvara wields Māyā and is not deluded by it. He is the Māyin. The individual soul can only create his private universe. He cannot give rise to the objective world. He has helplessly to experience them as they are given to him by God. He cannot condition them. On the other hand, Īśvara is the cosmic subject with the world as his object. He is not only the creator but is also the sustainer and destroyer of the world. The relative reality and objectivity of the world are due to him. Its regularity and law-abiding nature are due to him. If the world is *the world* and not the dream world, it is due to Īśvara. The God of Śaṅkara lasts as long as there is even a single finite soul. He is co-eval with all souls and the world. Māyā is the interpolating principle between Brahman and Īśvara and in fact, between all that exists and Brahman. Śaṅkara's God is the Absolute in the world context. He is the supreme from the cosmic end. He is the logical highest as Īśvara and Brahman is the intuitive highest. Brahman is the philosophical ideal, Īśvara is the religious goal. We can never realise Brahman by denying and eschewing God. Only by realising and



transcending Him, we can have Brahman realisation. God is a necessary step in the Advaita discipline for Brahman realisation.

Advaita thinkers have held the view that without the grace of God, the desire to walk the path of Advaita, will not occur to the individual. Professors Datta and Chatterjee have clinched the issue in their excellent manual on Indian Philosophy. "Śankara is sometimes accused of atheism. This charge stands or falls according as God is taken.... If God connotes among other things the Supreme Reality, Śankara's theory is not surely atheism, but the logical perfection of the theistic faith. Indeed, whereas atheism believes only in the world and not at all in God, and ordinary theism believes in both, the world and God, Śankara believes only in God and God only. For him God is the only Reality. Rather than denying God, he makes most of God.... If this type of faith is to be distinguished from ordinary theism (or belief in personal God) the word for it should be, not atheism, but rather *super-theism*."

Śaṅkara's conception of God is a part of the living Advaita tradition. Worship of Īśvara is insisted on as the step to the fuller realisation. Īśvara is the highest symbol of Brahman. Symbols are indispensable means for the communication of Truth. The Brahman of Śaṅkara cannot be described. The human mind cannot but resort to symbols to express its highest thoughts. Thomas Aquinas says that all language about God must be necessarily analogical. Professor A. N. Whitehead writes: "Symbolism is no mere idle fancy or corrupt degeneration; it is inherent in the very texture of human life. Language is itself symbolism." Symbol is the only way open to man to

express what is beyond the power of words. God is the highest logical symbol.

Like all the systems of Indian Philosophy, Advaita Vedānta too looks upon Mokṣa as the great spiritual ideal that man should seek. The ideal of Mokṣa must be distinguished from the ideal *abhyudaya*. *Abhyudaya* indicates the welfare ideal which is temporary and not eternal. Examples of this ideal are the attainment of Svarga (Heaven) or the enjoyment of the goods of life. Men are forced to return to Samsāra once the merit accrued is expended. Mokṣa is a permanent state from which there is no return to Samsāra. It is called *niśreyas*.

The concept of Mokṣa implies that men are in a state of bondage in the world. Bondage is due to ignorance. Different systems of Indian philosophy give different names to ignorance which is responsible for human suffering and bondage. All are agreed on the point that ignorance is the cause of bondage. They variously call it *ajñāna*, *avidyā*, *māyā*, *karma*, *mithyājñāna*. In the state of bondage, man is subject to all types of suffering and sorrow. Human life is a vale of tears. Three kinds of pain characterise the lives of men. The first arises from intra-organic causes like bodily and mental disorder and anxieties. This includes all our ailments, somatic and mental. The second source of sorrow arises from natural causes like beasts and fellow-men. It includes murder, snake-bite, poisoning. The third source of suffering arises from supernatural causes, such as demons, ghosts. All the three sources are together called *tāpatrayas* (three-fold suffering). Mokṣa is a way out of these troubles. It is the highest human value. It is the destiny of man. It is eternal and there is no lapse

from it, once we attain it. It is an absolute intrinsic value and not a means to any other further value. It is the highest *puruṣārtha*. It frees man from all the troubles and turmoils of life. It stands for the peace of the spirit. To attain it is the prime function of philosophy and not the vain pursuit of truth. It is at once the religious and the spiritual ideal of the Hindus. The peace that results from Mokṣa dispels all our doubts and disbeliefs and enables us to overcome moral strife and tensions.

The nature of Mokṣa and the way to attain it differ widely from school to school in Indian philosophy. But all of them are agreed that bondage is due to ignorance and realisation is due to knowledge. The way to Mokṣa is *jñāna*.

The Indian systems of philosophy have submitted the goods of the world to a thorough rational examination and have found them transitory and imperfect. They declare that all the things of the world are full of pain. They would agree with Hardy's description of the world as the "universal drama of pain in which joy is only a passing episode." They point to the experience of men. Too few of us attain the good of which we are capable; too many are capable of too little and all are capable for a short time. The quest for Mokṣa arises from this initial pessimism. The grand note of optimism is struck by the concept of Mokṣa. Mokṣa aims at a radical termination of all suffering. It is not an intellectual experience but a spiritual realisation. It is not discursive knowledge but immediate vision. It is not mental perspicacity but spiritual illumination. Mokṣa is total transformation.

Śaṅkara's conception of Mokṣa is unique and has no parallel in other systems. Mokṣa is a form of



self-realisation. It is a discovery of the true nature of the self i.e., Brahman. Brahman and the self are identical in essence. It is the function of Māyā that is responsible for the appearance of the world and the souls. With the onset of Brahman realisation the world is negated. The ontological status of the world is not the same as that of the souls. In the case of the soul what is denied, with the onset of Brahman realisation, is not the soul as such, but its finitude and ignorance. The individual soul is treated with great respect by Śaṅkara. Mokṣa is the realisation of the oneness of the soul with Brahman. Māyā is responsible for the separatist feelings. The separatist view (*bheda buddhi*) is at the root of all egoistic impulses and desires. It veils the truth that all is Brahman. The moment we feel that we are separate and different individuals, competition and hatred arise in us. We try to outdo others and regard our pleasure as entirely different from that of the others. This brings about the evils of an acquisitive society. The fundamental oneness of all is forgotten because of Māyā. The realisation of the fundamental oneness of reality leads to the fellowship of men. Religion in the words of Vivekānanda is the manifestation of the divinity in man.

Divinity is not external to man. It is his birth-right. We are all eternal and immortal. We are like the fabulous musk-deer that hunts for the fragrance which exudes from its own body. Mokṣa is native to the soul of man and is not derived. It is one's spiritual birthright. It is making known what is already there in man. It is not bringing out something, which is not. It is like the finding of the

forgotten golden ornament which is all the time on our person. It is not a gift from above but an inward realisation.

The soul of man is obscured by the thick layers of unreality in the form of *Māyā*. Once it is cleared we see the true nature of the self. Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* observes: "As long as the soul is associated with the adjunct of *buddhi*, so long only is the *jīva ajīva*. In reality however there is nothing like *jīvahood* apart from what is fancied to be such by the reason of this adjunct." Mokṣa is the realisation of the true nature of man. It is not a product, *utpādya*. It is eternal. If it is regarded as a product brought into being by grace or as the result of *Karma*, there is the contingency of its destruction. The simple law is, that which is born is destroyed. Hence, Śaṅkara argues that Mokṣa is eternal and not produced. Neither is Mokṣa a transformation of something into another entity. We have already seen how clearly illogical and self-discrepant is the concept of change. Hence, Mokṣa is not *vikārya* or *samskārya*. Mokṣa is not an attainment to a state after death. It is a realisation which can be had here and now. The realisation of Mokṣa in an embodied state is called *jīvanmukti*. One can realise the true nature of the self even in his very life. The Upaniṣads declare "that art thou" and not "thou wilt become that". Mokṣa is a realisation like the one that the prince of the legend experienced. He was brought up from his infancy as a hunter among huntsmen. He suddenly discovered that he was a prince. It is an integral, immediate realisation attained here and now.

The concept of *jīvanmukti* has strengthened the metaphysics of Advaita. The *jīvanmukta* is the com-

petent teacher who speaks from experience. These spiritual seers stick to their cosmic office and discharge their duties. Some of them are psalmists absorbed in the glory of their realisation. Others return to the world and crusade for the fulfilment of their vision. They drive the rest of humanity to attain the vision and the experience they had. The *jīvanmuktas* are the great exemplars of the Advaitic realisation. They experience no conflict. They are spontaneously virtuous. In them impulse and desire are one. In the words of Professor Hiriyanṇa they do not realise virtue but reveal them. They have no narrow selfish love. Their love is universal. In the words of the Upaniṣads they are not troubled by thoughts like "Have I done the right? Have I done the wrong?" They are above all sense of duality and moral conflict. They do not feel the constraint of obligation, the struggle with temptations, the distinction between rights and duties. The words of the *jīvanmukta* are wisdom, his work is worship, his conduct is consecration. The restraints of social obligation are replaced in him by the spontaneity of love. This does not mean that they are immoral or take a holiday from morality. They do not experience the strain and stress of morality. The morality of the *jīvanmuktas* is open morality. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* declares that "evil does not overcome him; he overcomes all evil. Free from evil, free from impurity, free from doubt he becomes a knower of Brahman."

Prof. Hiriyanṇa in an important article on the ethics of the Upaniṣads argues that the morality of the *jīvanmukta* is neither egoism nor altruism. Both altruism and egoism are correlates and necessarily imply each other. It is possible to be altruists only



when we perpetuate the particular and affirm our ego and have the flattering feeling that we are denying ourselves happiness for others' sake. The moral agent feels that he has benefited the world. In the last analysis such an activity affirms the ego of man. The *jīvanmukta* rises above this state. He is utterly unselfish. He has realised the true metaphysical nature of Reality. So he regards the whole world as his family. Having realised the divinity of men, he loves all.

Sāṅkara's conception of the divinity of man has made Advaita a universal religion. We find echoes of the same in all great mystics. Meister Eckhart writes: "The knower and the known are one. Simple people imagine that they should see God as if he stood there and they here. This is not so. God and I are one in knowledge." He adds: "To get at the core of God at his greatest, one must first get into the core of himself at his least, for no one can know God who has not first known himself. He asks us to go to the depths of the soul, to the root, to the heights, for all that God can do is focused there." Hugo St. Victor adds, "The way to ascend to God is to descend into oneself."

Sāṅkara's conception of Mokṣa is not the peculiar privilege of some alone. He does not divide souls into the fallen and elected ones. He speaks of salvation as universal. Speaking about universal salvation the European mystic William Law writes: "There is but one salvation for all mankind and that is the life of God in soul. That is God's gift to all Christians, Jews and heathens. There is not one salvation for the Jew and another for the Christians and a third for the heathens. Know God is one. Human nature

is one and salvation is one, and that is the desire of the soul turned to God!"

The two Advaita doctrines, Universal Salvation and *Jivanmukti*, speak of its catholic outlook and make for its wide acceptance. They distinguish Advaita from all other sectarian, denominational and prophetic cults which make for religious fanaticism and conversion.

We have so far examined the content of the intellectual beliefs of Śaṅkara's Advaita. His philosophy is not a mere theory of Reality set forth in rational terms for the satisfaction of the intellectual pursuits of man actuated by the love of knowledge for its own sake. Śaṅkara's Advaita is a spiritual guide and not merely a system of philosophy. It is a way of life that helps man to achieve spiritual realisation. Philosophy does not stop for Śaṅkara with the discovery of truth. But it ends only with the realisation of it. To attain Mokṣa we need a hard discipline. It is like walking on a razor's edge. The path is hard to cross and difficult to tread. Its realisation is not merely a matter of intellectual gifts. It requires moral and ceremonial purity also.

To realise Mokṣa we have to go through a hard ethical training. The goal is not achieved except by treading this way. This aspect of the training is treated in Advaita religion and ethics. Śaṅkara lays down that the spiritual aspirant should qualify himself before he undertakes the quest. Śaṅkara in his independent treatises (*prakaraṇas*) gives us a clear picture of the way to achieve the goal. Man is at the crossroads of evolution. Nature leaves him to take care of himself. He is distinguished from animals by his power of thought and his knowledge of good and

evil. He is free to make his future or mar it. He can climb heaven high or sink back to animal savagery. He has the power of choice in him. Śaṅkara writes that the importance of man consists in his capacity for thought and action. Man is no longer nature-directed but is self-conducted. Hence he has to make the choice and remove the ignorance that clouds his vision. Ignorance is the cause of all ceaseless activities. The ego of man longs desperately to be happy, it seeks freedom and security in all its activities. Man searches happiness in the finite things of the world where it is not.

Ignorance is destroyed by self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is achieved not by mere learning. *Katha Upaniṣad* declares: "The self cannot be attained by instruction or by intellectual power or even through much hearing. It is to be attained only by the one whom the self chooses. To such a man the self reveals his nature." It is an experimental understanding of the Real. It is not a blank acceptance nor blind obedience to the Vedas. It is not an inherited authority. It is not as if the teacher expounds the truth, declares the ultimatum and the pupil has only to accept it in its entirety. It is not the result of clever argumentation or sharp logic. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* declares that the repetition of scriptural passages and words is mere weariness of speech.

Intellectual knowledge does not by itself result in Mokṣa. In the celebrated dialogue between Nārada and Sanatkumāra we see the futility of much learning. The encyclopaedic knowledge of Nārada did not put an end to his sorrows. It only augmented his sadness. So, he sought spiritual instruction from Sanatkumāra. So was Dr. Faust of Goethe. Faust says:



I have studied now philosophy  
 and jurisprudence and medicine  
 and even, alas theology,  
 with vision keen, from end to end  
 and yet poor fool, with all my lore  
 I am no wiser than before.

In similar words Nārada confesses his sadness. He declares that he was only learned in *mantras* and did know anything about the Ātman. So he sought that knowledge of the Ātman which puts an end to all sorrows alike.

Earthly possessions like wealth and strength do not give us Mokṣa. The sage Yājñavalkya declared to his intelligent wife that of Mokṣa, however, there is no hope through wealth. Ceremonial purity and ethical training are the indispensable necessities for spiritual realisation. The path to the goal is clearly worked out in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā*. The average human being has to face the choice between the way of life and the way of death. In the language of the *Upaniṣads* everyone of us is presented the two goals, the good and the pleasant. "Different is the good and different indeed is the pleasant." "These two with different purposes bind a man. Of these two, it is well for him who takes hold of the good, but he who chooses the pleasant fails of his aim." "Both the good and the pleasant approach man; the wise man, pondering over them, discriminates; the wise chooses the good in preference to the pleasant. The simple-minded, for the sake of worldly well-being, prefers the pleasant."

It is not in the power of man to evade the choice. He has to make the choice. The choice is the result of rational reflection and the faith in spiritual values. These alone make man choose rightly. It is the right choice that leads men from the world of disvalues to

the world of values. "From the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality" is the progress of the pilgrim. The choice involves a form of faith to begin with. The more firm the faith, the greater the chance of its being realised. Aldous Huxley remarks that "faith is the pre-condition of all systematic knowing, all purposive doing and decent living." "Faith," our poet Tagore adds, "is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is dark." To begin with, ethical discipline in the form of self-control is absolutely necessary for spiritual life. The natural life of man is a state of distraction. We are an animal organisation and require constant stimulation. The stimulation always comes from outward excitements such as drugs, alcohol, sex, etc. The stimulation is not supplied by reason nor is it easy for the will to control it.

Human activity is mostly prompted by impulses and the overpowering passions govern it. The bell of reason is not heard. The impulses are strong, irresistible and ungovernable. It is painful to control them. The prospect of evil consequences of the act of indulgence, does not deter the indulgence. Reason, 'the slave of passions,' argues that the consequences can be bypassed. It is at this stage that the will and self-control come to play their part.

Self-control is the control of the impulses and their proper direction in the light of some strongly desired ideal. It involves faith, intelligence, foresight and skill. Self-control is an antidote to mechanical repetitive living. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, self-control is freedom from routine. It is conscious goal-directed activity. It is a false psychology which holds that we can overcome our temptations by indulging in them. Manu wrote long ago that there can-

not be the quelling of desires by indulgence. It would be like attempting to quell the flames of the fire by pouring ghee into it. Marcus Aurelius declared: "The desires of the senses draw us hither and thither, but when the hour is past, what do they bring us but remorse of conscience and dissipation of the spirit?" He adds that man can never subdue his desires by the power of enjoyment. "Hopedst thou perhaps to subdue desire by the power of enjoyment; but thou wilt find it impossible for the eye to be satisfied by seeing, or the ear to be filled with hearing. If all visible nature could pass before thee in review, what would it be but vain vision?"

Self-control is the first step in the ethical training of man. It keeps us vigilant. Sloth must be overcome. It is the great enemy of all efforts. It is the inspirer of cowardice, irresolution and self-pity. It is sloth that makes the body resist the will and sabotages it, alarming it by the unconscious urges. Wakefulness is absolutely necessary for effective self-control. Heraclitus writes: "Those who are wakeful have one common world; those that are sleeping, each a different world." Gautama the Buddha devotes a whole chapter to vigilance in his *Dhammapada*. "Vigilance is the path of eternal life; thoughtlessness is the path to death." Diligence and unremitting inner fight are necessary for spiritual life. The Upaniṣads exhort us to "arise and be awake." Further, the senses are so constructed as to look out and the will of man must redirect them and reverse their process and look in. We must not allow Nature to work its own way. We must fight Nature hard and bring about an inversion of the natural orientation of our consciousness. Lack of self-control leads to attachments and aversions which in their train



bring us grief and trouble. In inimitable language, the Gītā describes the chain of reactions:

Thinking about sense objects  
 Will attach you to sense objects;  
 Grow attached, and you become addicted.  
 Thwart your addiction, it turns to anger;  
 Be angry, and you confuse your mind.  
 Confuse your mind, you forget the lesson of experience.  
 Forget experience, you lose discrimination.  
 Lose discrimination, and you miss life's purpose.

*Viveka* leads to *vairāgya*. Self-control must be quiet and sane and not a process of fanatical self-punishment. The body must not be brutally beaten but must be handled firmly as a gallant rider treats his horse, sparingly using the spurs. The images employed by the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and Plato are picturesque and powerful. They declare and ask us to "know the self as the Lord of the chariot and the body as the chariot, know the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as the reins." The senses are the horses, the objects of the senses are the paths; the self, associated with the body, the senses and the mind is the enjoyer. "He who has no understanding, whose mind is always unrestrained, whose senses are out of control, has wicked horses for a charioteer." "He, however, who has understanding, whose mind is always restrained, senses under control, is like a charioteer who has good horses."

Courage is the soul of self-control. It is the basis of all virtues. Fear is the most degrading of all vices. It destroys our mind and corrupts our morals. Faith, hope, charity and all the rest of the virtues become virtues only when we have courage to express them. Courage takes on two forms: (1) physical courage and (2) moral courage. Physical courage makes a man

risk injury or death for a cause. But moral courage enables an individual to face coolly, stake his all for what he thinks to be right. Fearlessness (*abhaya*) is the result of philosophic knowledge. The perception of spiritual truth is in proportion to the degree of moral perfection we have attained. Without courage and self-control, it is not possible to be bold. Ceremonial purity and ethical excellence cleanse the mind of all impurities.

Spiritual courage makes us self-confident. It enables us to get up and to go to our work and remove the obstacles. It prevents us from lying down under obstacles and indulge in self-pity.

Ethical training and self-control tame the animal in us. It enables us to hold back and not throw ourselves into the fray. It builds moderation in our ways of life. It makes us avoid the extremes, choose that golden mean, that safe middle course between opposing extremes. It enables us to hesitate, halt, weigh the pros and cons, resist the sway of passions and the pressure of circumstances. We must banish hurry and avoid senseless movements and cultivate the *poise*. The *Gītā* lays down the eternal law of spiritual development when it says, "There is no happiness for those who have no peace." It describes the middle path as Yoga. "Yoga is not for him who eats too much or abstains too much from eating. It is not for him who sleeps too much or keeps awake too much." "For a man who is temperate in food and recreation, who is restrained in his actions, whose sleep and waking life are regulated, there ensues the discipline which destroys all sorrows."

It is Yoga that enables us to obtain a stable and steady mind governable by our will and frees us from

animal cravings. It enables us to achieve a resolute single-mindedness (*vyavasāyātmikā*), without which we would all be infirm of our purposes. Single-mindedness gives us a commanding position over the actions in life. In the words of Charles Morgan, "Singleness of mind can be achieved only when the will of man is in union with one idea." Without self-control, in the words of Gandhiji, "We will all be mental voluptuaries at the hand of chance desires and undisciplined impulses." The mind must attain "the steadiness of a lamp that flickereth not in a windless place."

All these ethical efforts pre-suppose the freedom of man's will. Self-efforts is necessary to overcome passions. The *Gītā* might speak of self-surrender as the great ethical value. But the Master in the scripture has throughout exhorted Arjuna to overcome passions with self-effort. Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes the passions as veiling wisdom and deluding us. Hence the exhortation to control the senses and to slay the constant enemy of the wise. In the words of Blake: "If the doors of perception are cleansed, everything will appear to man as it is, infinite." In the words of Buddha: "No heaven is too high for those to reach, whose passions sleep subdued." Shakespeare expresses the same thing in *Hamlet*:

Blessed are those  
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled  
They are not a pipe for fortune's fingers  
To sound what stop she please  
Give me that man, that is not passions' slave  
Ay, I will wear him in my heart's core,  
Or in my heart of heart.

With self-control starts the performance of moral duties. Life according to Dharma is possible only for



those that have tamed the ape and the tiger in them. The Dharmic life serves two purposes, the welfare of society and the individual's spiritual progress. Dharma is the operating force for integration and coordination. It is the mediating and corrective principle in the cosmic mechanism. Dharma supports and upholds the world of living beings. It is the conscious adoption of the principles of perfect life in the world. Dharma is not an abstract ideal. It is not a mere set of rules. It is the universal law. It sustains society, it permeates all. What is contrary to it perishes. It is unethical to transgress Dharma. It restores spiritual harmony. It is the kingdom of God on earth.

To live the Dharmic life the Vedāntin enjoins on man a scheme of duties. Through the discharge of different duties man fulfils his Dharma and grows to his perfection. There should be no divorce between practice and precept. Moral life does not grow like grass. It involves a strict discipline. The practice of certain virtues is enjoined on all. These virtues are called *Sādhāraṇa Dharmas*. They are common human virtues. They must be practised by all.

Besides these duties, every individual is asked to practise some additional virtues which belong to him on account of his station and temperament (*āśrama* and *varṇa*).

Individual and social morality are fitted into the scheme of training to enable the individual to attain spiritual realisation. The role of *karma* in Advaita is directed to achieve two purposes, social welfare and the cleansing of the individual mind of all selfish desires. It removes all those instinctive tendencies in man that make him yield to selfish desires. Social duties are a great check on the unbridled

selfishness of man. The scheme of social morality which differs from individual to individual and also differs in the different stages of man's life is of great psychological value. All are not asked to follow the same discipline. Temperamental differences and intellectual maturity are given due consideration in the prescription of duties. The *varṇāśrama dharma* is an educational formula devised with a view to securing the sound upkeep of social organisation and civic cohesion. It takes into account the differences in the temper and the talents of men and does not force all into one way. It has provided ample room for the differences in the aptitudes and the abilities of man. It avoids social waste. It stands for ordered freedom. It aims to secure the highest degree of co-ordination and envisages a society which is neither capitalistic, governed by unregulated free enterprise, nor regimented. It does not stand for class domination, as is often misunderstood by our Communist friends. It is not a camouflage for domination and exploitation of others.

Ethical life is an indispensable step for spiritual realisation. The good life can never be bypassed. Spiritual realisation is not for him who has not acquired moral excellence. The *Katha Upaniṣad* declares: "Not he who has not desisted from evil ways, not he who is not tranquil, not he who is not concentrated in mind, not even he whose mind is not composed can reach the Self through self-knowledge."

The pursuit of Vedānta is to be undertaken by the aspirant after acquiring certain preliminary virtues. Śaṅkara outlines the preliminary discipline. It consists of the control of the mind and control of senses (*śama* and *dama*). They stand for temperance

of thought. Renunciation of acts follows in a spirit of fortitude—*uparati* and *titikṣā*. These indicate a form of courage in enduring pain and pleasure. The fifth characteristic is a certain degree of concentration on the ideal. It is called *samādhāna*. The last of the characteristics is the faith in the philosophical ideal imparted in the *Śāstras*. It is called *śraddhā*.

The spiritual aspirant must learn the Vedāntic teaching from an enlightened and illumined *guru* and not through self-study. The Upaniṣad declares: "He that has a *guru* knows." "And to know the truth the aspirant must approach the *guru* that is wise and devoted to Brahman with fuel in his hands." The acceptance of the *guru* is obligatory on all. All virile spiritual traditions have proclaimed the necessity of a *guru*. It is not a convention or a formality or an evasion of responsibility. Śaṅkara reiterates it in his commentary on the above cited passage. "He must necessarily approach the *guru* who is characterised by composure of mind, self-control, love, etc. *Even one that is well-versed in the śāstras should not set about seeking Brahman by himself.* That is the force of the affirmative particle *eva* in the word *gurumeva* in the above passage."

What is learnt from the *guru* through *śravaṇa* might not impress us. We have to debate within ourselves and reflect on it. This is called *manana*. The teaching must become our own. Others teach us the truth they have reached as well as the method by which they did so. We have to use our own reason to repeat successfully the process described by the *guru* and re-discover the truth for ourselves. Rational reflection is necessary to get to the depth of conviction. We will have to argue out the opposing views



that assail our conviction. Personal reflection assists the aspirant in fighting contrary positions and helps him to realise the great truth of Advaita. It overcomes all those tumults and lusts that give fierce battle to the central truth of Advaita. *Manana* or reflection is the name given to that mental operation by which reasons are thought out and the discords between the Vedānta teaching and other modes of testimony are removed. Reflection burns the truth into the aspirant's mind. It makes the external opinion we get from the *guru* inwardly clear.

The intellectual conviction is still mediate knowledge. It is not the direct experience of ultimate Reality. By constant meditation it has to be transformed into a vision. The theory must become an experience (*anubhava*). It must be a *sākṣātkāra*, i.e. a direct realisation. To this experience the process called *nidhidhyāsana* leads us. It is the meditation of the truth of Advaita till it is transformed into a direct experience. The intellectual conviction is likely to be disturbed by old habits and unconscious urges. Meditation overcomes them.

*Nidhidhyāsana* is the way to realisation. The author of the *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* describes it. "It is that operation by which we fix our mind on self, drawing it away from all worldly concerns towards which it is attached by a beginningless habit."

The Vedāntin prescribes a number of *upāsanās* for transforming the mediate knowledge of Advaita into actual realisation. Śaṅkara defines *upāsanā* in his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. "It means reaching by the mind the form of a deity or something else as delineated in scriptural passages relating to meditation and concentrating the mind on it—

uninterrupted by secular thoughts—until identity with that deity or other thing is realised in the same degree in which identity is now realised with our body.”

*Upāsana* involves concentration and sympathetic imagination. First of all the mind is abstracted from everything except the object of meditation. Secondly, union with the object meditated is established. It enables us to fix a continuous flow of thought about a thing without any interruption by other cross-currents of the mind. It is also described as the constant memory (*dhruva smṛti*).

The meditation when intensely practised brings about the realisation. The great sayings of the Upaniṣads that declare the identity of the individual and Reality open our eyes and behold the truth. With the onset of this experience we no longer feel that we are banished strangers and little men but divinity itself. We realise the truth of the saying that we are Brahman. Such an experience makes us realise the manifest destiny of men, the ground and the goal of human life. The mystics of the world have such an experience. They have brought the knowledge of their experience to all of us.

More than any aspect of Advaita Vedānta, the ethical philosophy of Śaṅkara has been the target of attack from the moderns. The attack takes on more than one form. Ethical life has no autonomy of its own and is made the hand-maid of religion by Śaṅkara. Further, the spiritually perfected individual is beyond good and evil. Above all, there is no room for individuality, its growth, development or perfection. The individual is absorbed in the Absolute.

Dr. Schweitzer holds the view that the ethics of Vedānta and Buddhism are one of perfection. The



Vedāntin regards all activity, in the opinion of the learned doctor, as the result of ignorance. Non-activity is the mark of the spiritual man. So, the Vedāntin preserves himself from impurity of action. The desire for perfection and not compassion is at the root of Vedānta morality. That is the finding of Dr. Schweitzer. Further, he fails to see how the world-negating philosophy of Śaṅkara can inspire individuals to be morally active. Morality is possible only if we have "reverence for life." If we look upon the world in which we live as a huge nightmare and a delusion we would always disassociate ourselves from everything including existence upon earth. The doctrine of *māyā* is interpreted by the great humanist doctor as furthering the denial of life.

The ethical philosophy of Śaṅkara does not result in indifference. It is not inhuman or selfish as described by the critics. It is not the cold shunning of everybody and every human interest for the working out of one's own salvation. Śaṅkara makes the ethical perfect through spiritual experience. Ethical values need spiritual sanction. Without spiritual experience ethical virtues remain as mere habits. True humanism is based on spiritual experience. Secular morality has no sanctions and does not inspire us to pursue values in the face of opposition. Śaṅkara does not belittle ethical virtues. He delves deep into the nature of human love. Human love is not a mere transitory fancy. It is there because of the fundamental oneness of reality. Our love is exclusive and limited because we have a separatist view of reality. It is again ignorance of the universal oneness of reality that makes our love conditional and purposive. Spiritual experience makes us realise without a



shadow of doubt the brotherhood of man. We know that we are all one. Such a realisation can never result in indifference to others. Morality becomes perfected and spontaneous through spiritual realisation. Narrow selfish love flowers into universal compassion. Hence, Advaita ethics is to be regarded as not ruling out the ordinary virtues of human life.

At a time in our homeland when false doctrines were misleading men, the heterodoxy of the age either refuted the authority of the Vedas or misinterpreted its message in terms of a barren and dead rituals. It was Śaṅkara who recaptured the essence of the Veda. Śaṅkara was the hero who restored the Upaniṣadic Philosophy into its great place. Śaṅkara's loyalty to the Vedas and his Philosophic genius enabled to leave for posterity a Philosophy that has no conflict with any other system. In his characteristic lucid and majestic prose he not only established the non-duality of Brahman (*brahmādvaita*) but also the non-difference between different faiths (*darśanādvaita*).

The philosophy of Śaṅkara can best be described as the best type of spiritual humanism. It is rationalistic in its approach to the problems of philosophy and experimental in its confirmation of the truth. It is the only religion that has the chance of being accepted by our generation who are children of science and reason. As religion, it is least dogmatic, most universal and least sectarian. It is at once a philosophy of values and a grand metaphysics. Śaṅkara's imposing and inspiring system of metaphysics is the greatest contribution of India to World thought and religion. Through his devotional poems and grand philosophic prose and supreme organisational powers he stands as the greatest of India's philosophers for all times.

## Chapter VII

### RĀMĀNUJA'S THEISTIC VEDĀNTA

The term Vedānta does not merely apply to the system of Śaṅkara's Advaita. It is the general name for all those systems that have for their authority the three texts:—*Upaniṣads*, *Gītā* and *Vedānta Sūtras*. The *Gītā* and the *Vedānta sūtras* express, explain and systematise the message of the *Upaniṣads*.

The very fact, that the opposing schools of Vedānta like those of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja quote texts from the *Upaniṣads* as their authority, discloses the fact that the *Upaniṣads* are all not of one view. There are two distinct currents of thought in the *Upaniṣads*, one a strong current of Absolute Idealism that is after the heart of Śaṅkara. The statements in the *Upaniṣads* that describe the concept of Nirguṇa Brahman, the cosmic view, the doctrine of *māyā*, and the identity and merger of the individual soul with Brahman represent the first view. Śaṅkara regards them as the true view and so he sets aside the second view.

The theistic schools of Vedānta have for their inspiration the second current of thought in the *Upaniṣads* which looks upon Reality as a Supreme Person, an adorable object, as the true and loving God of religion. "He is absolute in the fullest sense of the term. He is the denial of all denials, the real of all reals. God is the Protector of all beings, is the Lord of all, and dwells in the heart of man; that seeing Him as he is, and everywhere, is eternal bliss and this is to be attained by contemplation and the purification of the soul and in that blissful condition the individual soul

attains to a perfect similarity with the supreme soul." (Mun. III. 1.3). Supreme Personality manifests itself into various forms as *avatārs* i.e., incarnations. The concepts of immanence and the transcendence of God are found in the Upaniṣads. The doctrine of *upāsanās* is the source for the Bhakti doctrine of the latter-day theistic schools of Vedānta.

Rāmānuja was the first to present a systematic school of theistic Vedānta. His line of interpretation is opposed to that of Śaṅkara. The system outlined by Rāmānuja is called *Viśiṣṭādvaita* Vedānta. He derived the doctrines of his system from the triple texts, *Bhāgavata*, *Pāñcarātra Āgamās*, and the mystical writings of a number of god-intoxicated men called *Ālvārs*. These *Ālvārs* lived between the 7th and 9th centuries and wrote about their mystical experiences in their mother-tongue Tamil. Their songs are over four thousand in number. They are commented on by a number of authors and a huge literature in the regional language has grown round them. These songs are recited in all the Vaiṣṇava temples. They are the foundations of Indian theism in the South. Students of Tamil literature regard the songs as great literary productions. Rāmānuja records that prior to him there were ancient teachers like Dramida, Taṅka and Guhadeva. Rāmānuja has commented on the *Gītā* and the *Vedānta sūtras*. As for the Upaniṣads he has taken the crucial and disputed passages and commented on them in his book on *Vedānta Saṁgraha*. There have been several able exponents of this school subsequent to Rāmānuja. Among them the most prominent is Vedānta Deśika whose dialectical skill and logical acumen are directed most forcibly against the Advaita of Śaṅkara.



Rāmānuja's philosophy has for its source and authority the triple texts and also the religious experience of the Ālvārs. He gives us a conception of the Absolute united to a type of personal theism. His exposition of the relation of the *world of matter* and the *world of souls* to God is influenced by the Bhāgavata religion and the mystical experiences of the Ālvārs. The elements that go into the making of Rāmānuja's system are "the influence of *upāsana* section of the Upaniṣads, the Bhāgavata literature reinforced by Prabhākara epistemology and the jīva doctrine of the Jaina Psychology."

His conception of Reality is that of a complex whole that is organic. Reality for him is not a homogeneous, non-composite consciousness. "Its unity is like that of a living organism, one element predominates and controls the rest." The predominant and controlling element is God. The *world of souls* and the *world of matter* are subordinate elements and stand in the relation of adjectives (*viśeṣaṇas*) to the Lord. These cannot by hypothesis exist by themselves separately. The complex whole (*viśiṣṭa*) in which they are included is described as unity. Hence the name *viśiṣṭādvaita* (*viśiṣṭasya viśiṣṭa-rūpeṇa advaitam*).

Rāmānuja's conception of the Absolute is best understood when we compare it with that of Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara's Absolute is regarded by Rāmānuja as a metaphysical monster. Such a conception is declared as no better than void. We can say nothing about it. It is ever inaccessible to us. It can never be absolute in the positive sense of the term. It is neither a demand of the head nor of the heart. The Absolute is the real of all reals. It is the denial of all denials. Rāmānuja believes that Reality is a supreme, adorable,

personal and loving God. The Upaniṣadic statement that “neither the mind nor speech can describe Brahman” does not mean that Brahman is unknowable. It means that with our finite intellect we cannot completely know all about the Lord. Our knowledge of Him is always bound to fall short of completeness. The negative descriptions of Brahman declare that the Lord has none of the imperfect virtues or the characteristics of the world. There is the complete absence of all undesirable *guṇās* in Him. Rāmānuja regards the Supreme as the home of infinite number of auspicious qualities (*ananta kalyāṇa guṇa paripūrṇā*). God’s very nature is *aprākṛta* i.e. not of the *prakṛt*, that is of the world. He is a *person* not in the finite sense of the term that we all are. It is only by analogy we call him a person. The materials that constitute the abode of the Lord and his personality are not made of *Prakṛti*. It is made of *Śuddha Sattva*. The supreme personality of the Lord is the most distinguishing feature of Rāmānuja’s system. The unique relation he envisages between the Lord and the world of matter and the world of souls is the distinctive mark of his system.

The fundamental authority for Rāmānuja’s conception of Ultimate Reality is the Upaniṣads. The roots of Rāmānuja’s monotheism can be traced back to the Vedas. In the Upaniṣads there is a warm current of theism and a personalistic conception of Reality. Supreme Reality is described as *Nārāyaṇa*. He is referred to as being immanent and also transcendent. He is referred to as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world.

The *Taittirīya* defines Brahman as that verity from which these beings are born, that by which

when born they live, that into which when departing they enter. That which we seek to know. That is Brahman." Supreme Reality is not exhausted in his creation. It is not pantheism. God is not merely the world. God minus the world is still God. For the pantheist, God minus the world is zero. Nor is Rāmānuja's system a type of deism. God does not create the world and leave it as a mechanic leaves a machine. The immanence of God in the external world and in the heart of man is the essential truth. It is perfectly consistent with the belief in God's transcendence. His being is distinct from the world and man. The God of Rāmānuja does not exist merely apart from the cosmos but also dwells in it. He is more than all his manifestations. God is not exhausted in the world, but he also exists separately. The pantheism of Rāmānuja is not the same as that of Spinoza.

A particular section of the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* brings out the immanence of God very clearly. It is called the *antaryāmi brahmana*. "He who is dwelling in the earth, is distinct from it, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, and who, being inside, controls the earth, is the indestructible controlling soul". The same statement is made about water, fire, sky, wind, the sun, the moon and the stars, the quarters, the lightning, thunderbolt, all the worlds, all the Vedās, all sacrifices, all beings, the vital breath, speech, the eye, the ear, the mind, the skin, light etc. "The Lord is distinct from the objects of the world; still he resides in all objects and uses them as his body, controls them from inside."

The *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* bring out the two characteristics of supreme Reality



as being transcendent and immanent. It is a personality without the limitations of the human significance of the term. From the transcendence and immanence of the Lord, two other qualities follow, namely, His nearness and love (*saṁlabhya* and *saṁśīlya*).

The world of souls, matter and Īśvara constitute a complex. They are distinct but held together. Rāmānuja thinks of God as a conscious mind and supreme person. He says that it is illogical and difficult to have a concept of God as substance. In the words of Prof. Stace: "If you think of God as a supreme person or a mind—however much you realise the inadequacy of the words, the difficulties wrapped up in the personalistic concept of God, however much you may try to avoid their ordinary crude meanings as applied to human beings—you cannot help being anthropomorphic. In short, the idea of God is incurably and necessarily anthropomorphic." 7266

The human mind always thinks and can only think analogically. The God of Rāmānuja has a peculiar type of relation with the world of souls and of matter. It is called *apṛthak siddhi* relation. Souls are distinct and eternal; so is matter. God does not create them out of nothing as in Christianity. They are also regarded as substances but in the complex unity envisaged by Rāmānuja they are treated as the attributes of the Lord. The two categories, souls and the world, are as real as God but they are dependent on the Lord and do not exist without Him. All three exist as a complex wherein souls and matter form the body of the Lord. The unity is the close fellowship of the three categories. They are not in the relation of *Samavāya* i.e., "an external relation between two inseparables which are distinct reals." The con-

cept of *samavāya* is criticised in *Vedānta Sūtra* and a logical analysis of it leads to the fallacy of infinite regress. So Rāmānuja abandons it and gives a new name to the relation between the three entities. It is an organic relation which obtains between substance and attribute, part and whole, body and soul, between substances. It is a vital relation. It brings out the intimate relation between God and other categories. The relation expounded by Rāmānuja brings out the two central doctrines of religion, namely: (1) that the worlds of matter and souls are sustained and supported by the Lord and (2) that they subserve the purposes of the Lord. Matter and souls exist for the Lord. God is the sole cause of all. In the words of Prof. Hirianna, "The world and the individual souls are real and distinct, the Absolute in which they are included is one. They are eternal with God but external to him." The distinction is not denied but at the same time organic unity of the whole is affirmed. We must note the fact that the souls are not modal transformation of the God as in Advaita. They are accessories to Him, to subserve His purposes. They are not identical with Him. When Rāmānuja refers to them as His body, "the 'body' is that which is controlled, supported and utilized for its purposes by a soul."

The intimate relation between the Lord and the souls is expressed in a number of ways by Rāmānuja. God is regarded as substance (*prakāri*) and souls are the outer attributes (*prakāra*). God is the *niyantā* i.e., the controller and we are the controlled (*niyāmya*). He is the supporter and we are the supported (*ādhāra* and *ādheya*). We are the parts. He is the whole (*aṁśa* and *aṁśī*). We are the means and He

is the end (*śeṣa-śeṣi*). Rāmānuja has for his support the *Śvetāśvatara*. "The eternal which rests in the Self should be known. Truly there is nothing beyond this to be known. By knowing the enjoyer, the object of enjoyment and the mover of all, everything has been said. This is the threefold Brahman."

Rāmānuja's conception of God is intimate and it answers the purposes of religion. God is with us. He is close to us and works in our lives. He is seated in the heart of men. The conception of God as an abstraction chills us. The God of Rāmānuja is neither an intellectual abstraction that is inoperative in the behaviour of men nor is it a conventional and barren verbal formula that we keep on repeating because it is our habit. Nor is the God of Rāmānuja the God of the deists, the first cause who created the world and left it there, like Paley's watch-maker. Nor is God a hypothesis that explains how the world originated and has no import in the daily affairs of our life. The remoteness and the non-concern of God to the world has destroyed the force of religion. The God of Rāmānuja is the God of the *Gītā*; "he is the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the great Lord of all the worlds, the friend of all beings." God is described in the *Bhāgavata* as the beloved, the self, the son, the friend, the teacher and the relative and the desired deity. He is not the mere distant world-ruler; He is the intimate friend who heralds light and imparts wisdom in the dark days. He takes on *avatāras* to help men and show the way of life and truth.

Metaphysical gods like those of Aristotle and Whitehead may give us truth, but as Pascal writes "we make an idol of Truth, for Truth without charity



is not God, but his image and idol which we must neither love nor worship."

Rāmānuja speaks of a five-fold manifestation of God. He calls the transcendent form Nārāyaṇa or Vāsudeva. Vaikunṭha is His abode. He as the inner-ruler in us all, is called the *antaryāmin*. He takes on the incarnations as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha in his *vibhava* form. He is also manifest in some temples in the form of idols. The various forms of Nārāyaṇa are called Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Thus the God of Rāmānuja is the example of a perfect religious concept. He is described as being responsive to the wishes of the devotee, sensitive to his needs and akin to his spirit. He is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the world.

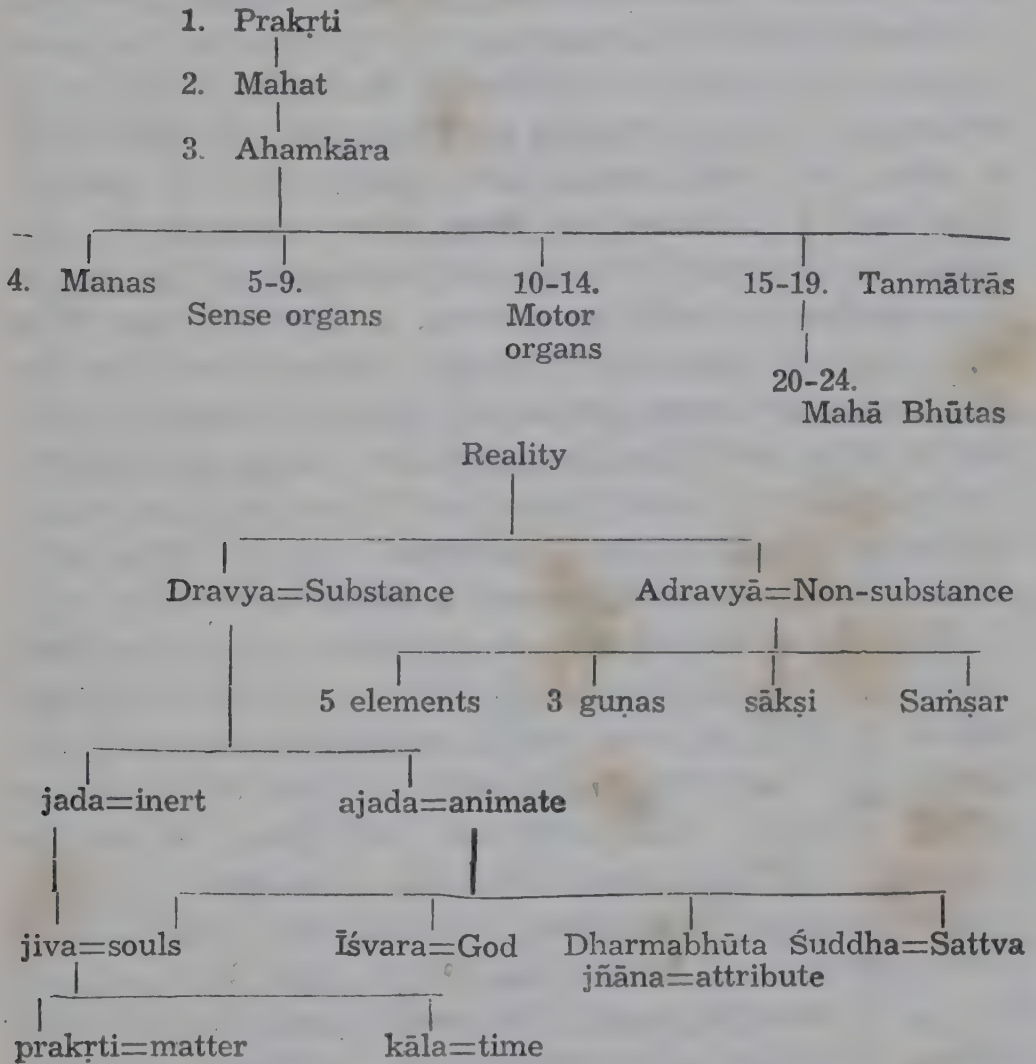
Rāmānuja's God and his conception of soul, both alike, involve change and permanence. Both are substances having their own inseparable attribute called *dharmabhūta jñāna*. The attribute changes and not the substance. The God of Rāmānuja does not Himself change into the various forms but only his *dharmabhūta jñāna* changes. The attributive element alone changes. There is no direct change for the Lord. The changes of the Lord into various forms is mediated through the *dharmabhūta jñāna*. Such an explanation wards off all the possible objections against the change of the Lord into the various forms (*Parīṇāma vāda*). The attributive element i.e., the *dharmabhūta jñāna* is in inseparable relation with its substance, the Lord. God does not suffer bondage or sorrow in taking on several manifestations. It is only the attributive element that changes. Further, bondage, sorrow and such experiences are the result of the individual's Karma but the Lord is the Lord of Karma

and He is not affected by it. This distinction between substance and attribute is intended to meet the possible objections against *Pariṇāma vāda*.

The nature of the individual soul is conceived by Rāmānuja as atomic. It has also its own *dharma-bhūta jñāna*, the attributive element. It comprehends in *samsāra* objects in a limited *manner*. When the soul attains salvation its knowledge expands to all things and almost becomes omniscient. The souls are eternal and infinite in number and beginningless. It has an organic inseparable connection with the Lord. It is His attribute. The soul is a free agent, an active purposeful being (*kartā* and *bhoktā*). But the Lord is the inner-ruler immortal of the souls. After liberation the soul becomes free but is subordinate only to the Lord. He is just like the Lord his maker, except for the difference of not being the creator of the world and its sustainer.

Prakṛti for Rāmānuja is as eternal as the Lord. It is the abode of the soul of man as well as of the Lord. It is one of the triple categories. It has three characteristics, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Prakṛti with its *guṇas* is made use of by the Lord for his creation. It is not infinite, though it is eternal. It is still under the sway of the Lord. It is in inseparable relation with the Lord on one side and the souls on the other. The evolution of Prakṛti into 24 categories is the same as in Sāṅkhya. Prakṛti does not touch the Lord. The limbs of the person of the Lord and his abode Vaikuṇṭha is made out of a substance called *nitya vibhūti*. It is like Prakṛti but without its two *guṇas*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is pure *sattva* (*śuddha-sattva*).

We have so far examined the various philosophical categories of Rāmānuja's system. The following table gives us at sight the different categories and their relation to others:



Let us advert to the study of Rāmānuja's method of God realisation. He is the fountain-head of Indian theism. The individual soul on account of its own Karma gets bound to *saṁsāra*. Bondage is ignorance of the omnipresent nature and goodness of the Lord. The tragedy of the individual soul is its feeling that



it can do all the things of the world. Affirming his own autonomy and self-sufficiency is the sin of man. It is self-pride. The illusion of self-pride is smashed in the God-created world and thus man realises that he is just a creation of the Lord on whom depends his whole life. This realisation does not easily dawn on man. It is first of all based on faith. Faith is as essential a faculty of man as reasoning. It enables us to step out and break free from what is purely empirical. It releases us from the tyranny of the world of things. Faith in the message of the scripture, as learnt from the master, is the first step. The *Gītā* declares that he “who is ignorant and has no faith, ever doubting, perishes.” We need an unwavering faith to love the Lord. In the words of Huxley, “faith is the pre-condition of all systematic knowing, all purposive doing and all decent living.” The faith in the Lord is everything and is necessary for the soul to love the Lord. Faith is summed up in the first mantra of the *Īśa Upaniṣad*. “Know all this, whatever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God.” Gandhiji’s comment on this verse brings out the force of the mantra. “The mantra describes God as the Creator, the Ruler and the Lord. The seer to whom this mantra or verse was revealed was not satisfied with the very frequent statement that God was to be found everywhere.” He went further, and said: “Since God pervades everything, nothing belongs to you, not even your own body. God is the undisputed, unchallengeable Master of everything you possess. If it is universal brotherhood—not only brotherhood of all human beings, but of all living things—I find it in this mantra. It is unshakable faith in the Lord and Master—and all the adjectives you can think of—I

find it in this mantra. If it is the idea of complete surrender to God and of the faith that He will supply all that I need, then again I say I find it in this mantra. Since He pervades every fibre of my being and of all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of the equality of all creatures on earth and it should satisfy the cravings of all philosophical communists. This mantra tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God and that, if my life and that of all who believe in this *mantra* has to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service of fellow creatures.”\* Faith in the Lord is the result of the knowledge of His greatness, power and love. Faith is the beginning of *bhakti*. The knowledge or *jñāna* of the Lord's qualities leads to His contemplation. That grows into the full love of the Lord.

Rāmānuja's conception of the Supreme as a person makes the concept of Bhakti easy. Bhakti is of the nature of love (*prema*). When it is directed to different individuals, it takes on different names, such as the parental love, sensual love, friend's love. The emotion of love is universal and the most potent factor in man. It is man's nature to love. Pascal declared, “The human mind naturally believes, and the human heart naturally loves.” Love is man's effort to fly from loneliness. It is almost instinctive in man. If he cannot find a God in heaven, he will fall down before a God on earth and deify some idols of his own making, be it a nation, a class or party or an ideology. Man needs to transcend his self to be truly human. This urge to transcend himself is expressed in his love. Men are prepared to make all sorts

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\* Harijan, 1937,

of sacrifices for those whom they love and they in their turn love them also. It is a universal human mode of communion. So men find it easy to take to it.

Human love with all its warmth when dedicated to the Lord is called *bhakti*. It is all-consuming and does not keep back anything. It is a total giving. It is complete self-effacement. In the words of St. Paul it is self-emptying, without which there is no divine filling. "Not, I, Christ lives in me. Vāsudeva is all that is."

The most difficult thing in the world to give up is self-love and other little loves. The real devotee through discriminative wisdom realises his creatureliness and finds no hope for him except through Lord's grace. He realises that fellowship with the Lord is his supreme destiny. Love of God is the supreme spiritual ideal, and the great secret to attain it is to love God more than all the objects in the world. *Bhakti* is that kind of attachment to the Lord based on a complete understanding of the supremacy of the Lord, which transcends the love of one's self and possessions and which remains unshaken in death and difficulty. The surrender which the devotee makes to the Lord is conscious and is done in joy and not in a mood of despair or disgust. It is not submission to the force or terror which threatens to destroy. It is the joyous giving up of all, with the faith that is the consummation devoutly to be wished for. It is not the stoic attitude of acceptance of a fate which is above us as depicted by Hardy in his novels.

There is a joy in the life of the God-centred souls, before which all other pleasures stand no comparison. The devotees are not able to describe their joy fully.



They speak in symbols and their language often borders on that of passionate lovers. The thirteen pre-Rāmānuja Ālvārs represent a very strong school of Bhakti which melts our hearts. One of them, a woman saint, Āndāl, has given the exquisite outpouring of her heart which stands for the typical bridal mysticism. The Lord is loved with all the heart.

The term Bhakti comes from the root, meaning 'to serve' or 'to resort to' and signifies service or resorting to another for assistance. "It is turning to God for protection completely turning one's self to his service and sacrifice for God, and God's reciprocal love of man and the blessed communion between God and man." Bhakti brings order and beauty into the confused and tangled facts of our life.

Nārada the great sage has given us an excellent text explaining the path of devotion and its characteristics. The great *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* illustrates the function and the efficacy of Bhakti as seen in the lives of several devotees. It is the veritable treasure-house of devotional literature. Rāmānuja and other theists draw freely on the *Bhāgavata* for the doctrines of their faith.

Nārada defines Bhakti as intense love of God and says: "A man who loves God has no wants or sorrows. He neither hates nor joys nor strives with zeal for any ends of his own. For through Bhakti he is moved to rapture, and through Bhakti he attains peace and is happy in spirit." "Love of God is ineffable. It is as if a dumb man had tasted a delicious food and could not speak about it. It would be revealed only to the chosen few. For it is an experience pure and selfless, subtle, unbroken and ever-expanding. A man

who has once experienced God-love will see that alone and speak of that alone, for he ever thinks of that alone."

God's response to man's devotion is called grace, i.e. *prasāda*. The theistic schools believe that man's salvation is dependent on God's grace. It is derivative and not native to the soul of man. It is not the birth-right of the soul. It is a gift from God. "The high and the best way thither is run by desires and not by the feet. For he may be loved not thought. By love may he be begotten and holden but by thought never," says the great unknown author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. "The spirit bloweth where it listeth." "Many are called but few are chosen." The *Kaṭha* declares, "The ātman cannot be attained by the study of Vedas, nor by intellect nor even by much learning; by him it is attained whom God chooses." Let us listen to what the *Gītā* has to say on this topic. The Lord declares: "It cannot be attained either by the Vedas or by austerities or by gifts or sacrifices. But by unswerving devotion to Me, *I can be known, truly seen and entered into.*" "So he who does work for me, he who looks upon me as his goal, he who worships me, free from attachment, who is free from enmity to all creatures, he attains my fellowship. But those who worship me with devotion, they are in me and I am also in them." The Lord further says: "The devotees fix their thought in Me, their lives are wholly given up to me; enlightening each other and ever conversing of me, they are contented and rejoice in Me. They are constantly devoted and worship me with love. I grant them the wisdom by which they come to me. Out of compassion for those remaining within my own true state, I destroy the dark-

ness born of ignorance by the lamp of wisdom in them."

The Lord in another context says that he is responsible for the well-being of those individuals that are his devotees and those that throw themselves on Him for grace. "The virtuous ones who worship the Lord are of four kinds, the man in distress, the seeker after knowledge, the man who is after wealth and the man of wisdom." "Of these the wise one, who is ever in constant union with the divine, whose devotion is single-minded, is the best. For I am supremely dear to him and he is dear to me."

The irrevocable promise of the Lord according to Gandhiji is that "those who worship me and meditate on me alone, to them who ever persevere I bring all attainment of what they have not and security of what they have."

The Lord declares that his devotees never perish. Towards the end of *Gītā* the Lord gives us in full, his final opinion on Bhakti, as the most important means to attain him. The Lord says, "Through devotion the devotee comes to know Me, what my measure is and who I am in truth; then having known Me in truth, he forthwith enters into me." "Doing continually all actions, taking refuge in me, he reaches by my grace the eternal and the everlasting abode."

*Gītā*, the great scripture, is predominantly theistic and proclaims Bhakti as the most important means for God-realisation. The question that is generally raised in connection with Bhakti is whether morality is essential for it. That it is essential, is the verdict of all scriptures. There can be no godly life without good life. The good life is indispensable to religion. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall



see God," says the *Bible*. Bhakti involves the knowledge of the Lord and, in the words of Rāmānuja, it is the constant remembrance of the Lord (*dhruvānusmṛti*). And it also involves a particular way of life. Mostly Bhakti is for a supreme personal God. The Upaniṣad declares, "Not he who has not desisted from evil ways, not he who is not tranquil, not he who has not a concentrated mind, not even he whose mind is not composed can reach this through right knowledge."

The cleaning of one's moral being is absolutely necessary. "If the doors of perception are cleansed," in Blake's words, "everything will appear to man as it is, infinite." In all religions the individual has the consciousness of a divine being who is the controller of all things, towards whom man feels a sense of awe. They are God-fearing and not God-loving religions. The religious attitude is not the same as the magical attitude. It is born out of a complete understanding of the Lord. A genuine love and worship of the Lord is possible only when we know His true, infinite excellences. It is the *jñāna* or knowledge that God is Love, that makes the individual surrender himself to God. Bhakti includes love of God through the knowledge of His nature. The knowledge becomes perfect and absolute when we surrender to him completely out of *anurakti* which means love that arises after a knowledge of God's goodness and accessibility. Bhakti is fearlessness (*abhaya*).

The popular view that Bhakti is the path meant only for the ignorant and that it is attained through passive virtues such as humility and meekness, is not correct. The unqualified submission of one's self to

another is not easy. Self-hood and self-love are almost unconquerable in man.

A selfless self-giving without any question is Bhakti. In Bhakti there is the emphasis not on the self but on the object sought. Devotion is the natural relationship between the Lord and the soul. The complete love of God and surrender to Him is the best way of knowing the Lord. The only way to know God is to love Him, and the way to love Him is to know His infinite love for us. In religion we cannot separate knowing and doing. Love of God is not an arid constrictive virtue that men have to practise it from a sense of duty or with an eye to profit. Nor is it a mere whim of men. It is a response to the lovable. The lovable alone can be loved. Bhakti makes us surrender our ego to the will of the Lord. We say, "Thy will be done."

The actions that a *bhakta* does are dedications to the Lord. This is called in the language of the *Gītā kārma yoga*. The God-lover does the will of the Lord, without waiting for any reward. Secondly, according to Rāmānuja, the devotee does not love merely the Lord but loves his entire creation. He regards himself as the servant of the Lord and desires and strives to establish the kingdom of God on earth. He is called the *kīṅkara* of the Lord.

Love of God results in the love of humanity, for humanity is the glorious manifestation of the Lord. So the devotee forswears retaliation and loves all. The grace of the Lord which saves us is not the result of any condition. It is unconditional love (*nirhetuka kaṭākṣa*).

There can be no salvation without the grace of the Lord. The grace of the Lord is not a contract bet-

ween the soul and the Lord. It is his free gift which he bestows on us not because we deserve it, but because it is an overflowing love. There is nothing that can buy the grace of the Lord except a total giving up. Religion is not the activity of one individual. It is the work of God and of man. The human being has the free will to set aside the grace of the Lord. The wisest father cannot go on talking if the child will not listen. We cannot just create any love for God in ourselves just by wanting it. "We cannot create a plant out of nothing, nor force a seed to grow, contrary to its nature. We can give the plant the soil, the manure, the water, the light which will enable it to grow. That is all our moral effort can do and nothing more. The conditions can be determined, but the conditioning agent is free to bring about the event or not."

The Vaiṣṇava religion of Rāmānuja like Christianity lays a great deal of emphasis on social work and on humanistic ethics. It is to be undertaken as Lord's duty. The devotees of the Lord are of two types: those that are lost in the mystic rapture of the Lord and keep on in His Presence and do nothing. They are the psalmists or the contemplatives. The others are the active mystics, that are not satisfied with the vision of the Lord, but go out into the world beckoning others to go up the wall and see the vision. They do the will of the Lord. There are these types, the way of Martha and the way of Mary.

Rāmānuja regards the world as the creation of the Lord. It is the manifestation of the Māyā of the Lord. Māyā is not here used in Śaṅkara's sense of the term, but as the power of the Lord. For Rāmānuja, the world is the real and rational creation by the Supreme



Self's power and intelligence. It is neither the mechanical product of atoms nor the evolution of nature. Above all it is not the illusory projection of Māyā.

A follower of Rāmānuja, called Rāmānanda, migrated to northern India and spread Vaiṣṇavism through his disciples. Rāmānuja was the first among the *ācāryas* to build a system of Vedānta not exclusively on Sanskrit texts, the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*, but also based on Tamil works. This is the reason for describing his Vedānta as Ubhaya-Vedānta (using both Tamil and Sanskrit texts). He sets forth a unique relation between God, world and souls. It brings out the intimacy as well as the dependence of the categories. It is called *aprthak siddha* relation. He affirms the reality of the world. He speaks of the unitive experience of all souls as similar. Above all, his doctrine of the complete surrender to the Lord, *Prapatti*, is the most significant method outlined for God-realisation opened to all without distinction of caste, class, creed, age and sex. He throws open the gates of the temple to all alike. He regards that the Lord requires nothing but a contrite heart.

The doctrine of *Śaranāgati* (Surrender) brings out the conception of God as Love to the forefront. The individual soul who is not able to live aright and lapses from the divine commands feels miserable, helpless and lost. This utter sense of unworthiness and helplessness creates a feeling of sorrow. The Lord declares to such a man that he would redeem him if he surrenders to Him. That is the assurance of the Lord of the *Gītā* towards the end of the gospel. The aspirant has to follow the will of the Lord and give up whatever goes against Him. He is to keep absolute faith in

the Lord and His saving grace. He is to feel that he has to be saved in spite of himself. He should seek consciously the grace of the Lord as the only remedy open to him. The last act of the aspirant is to throw himself upon the grace of the Lord. This act of completely flinging oneself on God's compassion is called *Śaraṇāgati*. It is the resignation of one in extreme distress. "Man's extremity is god's opportunity," said William James.

The doctrine of complete self-surrender is the *sine qua non* of godly life. Rāmānuja respects the individuality and personality of the human soul, its distinctness and does not sacrifice it. This does not prevent him from placing his finger on the chief disease of man, namely, his ego, his selfishness, his self-centredness and his crude individuality. This has to be given up for spiritual regeneration. The real obstacle to spiritual life is selfishness and not personality. The acme of godly life is absolute self-suppression and the readiness to be a willing instrument of the Lord's purposes. This is the final stage of Bhakti. Whatever course of discipline one might follow, they all must end in this act of self-surrender.

In the words of Sri Aurobindo this is the law of living. It goes beyond all creeds, religious beliefs and personal aims of conduct. It is the crowning word, it is not merely the essence of Bhakti, it sweeps out all, and further breaks down every limit and rule, canon and formula and opens out a wide, vivid and illimitable spiritual experience. When we compare this process to Bhakti, we see that it has none of the restrictions and laborious processes of training. This

method is open to all and it is the most direct means to salvation.

This method, Rāmānuja holds, leads to immediate deliverance. The Lord though He has no shadow of sentimentality and is impartial to all is not without a soft corner for the *Prapanna* (the soul that has surrendered). He endures the ignorant and the stupid if they have a contrite heart. In the matter of human sin and folly, seen from His infinite height, the Lord is not upset nor is squeamish about the depth of degradation. If he hears once, the shrill and moving cry for deliverance arising from the depths of the heart, the Lord answers and sustains the devotee with his everlasting arms. The evidence for this experience is the life of all the God-lovers described in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. A single, serious moment of self-surrender is considered enough by Sri Rāmacandra in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Rāma declares: "This is the law of my ruling to give refuge and security to all beings, who say once at least, 'you are my refuge'." The doctrine of *Prapatti* is the corner-stone of Vaiṣṇavism. It has been responsible for the social uplift of all classes. It is road royal to the Lord. To be driven from the Church is not to be driven out of God's home. The immense possibilities of Vaiṣṇavism in the hands of orthodox thinkers have tended to become sectarian. The Lord belongs to all and none has an exclusive claim on Him.

The philosophy of Rāmānuja spread the love of God to all classes. The doctrine of self-surrender and the importance of Lord's grace are best described in Rāmānuja. The concept of grace "is not doing business with Gods," in the words of Plato's Socrates. It is the free act of God as Love. Hindu art and iconography



have given a permanent image of this, in the idol of Lord Viṣṇu. One hand of the Lord has its palm turned upward. This is called the *abhaya hasta*, the hand that assures freedom from fear to the devotee who has surrendered himself to God. The other hand has its palm turned towards the feet. It is called *varada hasta*, the hand of grace. The two are complementary to each other in the sense that the *abhaya hasta* assures protection to one who lays himself at the feet of the Lord as directed by the *varada hasta*. Self-surrender implies three elements. (1) The conviction that one belongs essentially to God (*svarūpa samarpaṇa*). (2) The firm dedication of the fruits of one's endeavour to God (*phalasamarpaṇa*). (3) The transfer of one's responsibility in the matter of *mokṣa* to the Supreme (*bhāra samparpaṇa*). "All care is at an end and *superfluous* when one has taken the care to throw all his cares at the feet of the Lord. Life is at its best when it is placed in the hands of the best." Our modern saint Vinoba Bhave has put the issue in simple words. The problem is how to make oneself a perfect instrument of God. How does one become a flute in Kṛṣṇa's hand? What would it be like if He put me to His lips and drew sweet notes through me? To be a flute means to become hollow. But, I am stuffed full with passions and desires. How then can music come through me? My tone is gruff. I am gross. I am filled with *ahaṁkāra*, the sense of the I. I must empty myself of my ego. Then music will come out of the flute from the Lord. Vinobaji declares that he is lost in the wish to become an instrument of the Lord. To commit self and life to the primal spirit is *Śaraṇāgati*. The great *Vaiṣṇava* writer declares, because our salvation is in

the hands of God and His nature, we are certain of it. If salvation was in our hands, we will never realise it or long for it. We will go in quest of false happiness and spare no effort to realise it. We humans are uncertain. God's love of man is infinitely greater than man's self-love. Rāmānuja has given us the most adorable theism and established the concept of God as Love for ever.

## Chapter VIII

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF ŚRĪ MADHVA

The Philosophy of Śrī Madhva goes by the name of Dvaita Vedānta. It is the most powerful, reasoned and scripturally supported attack on the monism of Śaṅkara. Madhva takes his stand on the Scriptures. Unlike other prophets, Madhva starts from scratch. He first of all examines the various instruments of knowledge i.e. Pramāṇas and accepts three of them. With the help of several arguments he first of all establishes the validity and the infallibility of the Vedas. Then, he accepts the doctrines enshrined in the Vedas. It is again from the Vedas that he establishes the nature of his divine mission as the third *avatāra* of Vāyu to correctly interpret the triple texts of the Vedānta. The Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa and the Bhagavad Gītā are valid because, they are being referred to in the Vedas as authoritative texts (*gr̥hita*) and also as they follow the message and meaning of the Vedas (*vedānusāri*). The Vedānta Sūtras constitute the *parā vidyā*, according to Madhva. Besides these three texts Madhva accepts several other texts like the Mūla Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Purāṇas and Pañcārātra *āgamas*. Madhva does not make any distinction between one part of the Veda and another part of the Veda. He accepts the two as a whole. The entire Veda is interpreted by him as having a single meaning. He has presented his doctrine as the synthesis of the entire import of all scripture. He is a grand reconciler of the various texts. Besides scripture, he accepts perception and inference as two other distinct Pramāṇas. After establishing the validity of the Vedas, Madhva takes



his firm stand on it. He regards God even as the exponent of the Vedas and not as its creator. The Vedas are eternal and beginningless. The Vedas are not the books on which they are printed. They constitute the eternal ancient wisdom.

From the Vedas, the most important doctrine he derives is his conception of God. The philosophy of Madhva is theistic to the core. His conception of God has ample support for it in the scriptures. Madhva's God is the supreme personality, home of all auspicious attributes. He is devoid of all defects. The *two* together express our idea of God as the perfect one. He is described as *the independent one*. All the other philosophical categories are dependent on him, though eternal and real. Independence in the philosophical language of Madhva means one who does not derive his existence (*Satta*), his knowledge (*Pramiti*) and activity (*Pravṛtti*) from others. The Lord is self-contained and perfect in Himself, every way. There is no kind of difference between the different limbs of the Lord or His different incarnations as Rama and Kṛṣṇa. There is nothing impossible for the Lord. His power for doing anything is unlimited. He can do things (*kartum*), he can undo things (*akartum*) and do it otherwise than as it is (*anyathā kartum*). Again, on the authority of the Vedas, Madhva argues that though the Lord is independent and illimitable in his powers still he out of his own sweet choice creates, saves and sustains the world of souls and matter as described in the Vedas. This does not mean that He is constrained by the Vedas. He chooses to do so. It is His nature to do so. The Upaniṣads describe it as His nature (*devasyeṣa svabhāvoyam*). He creates not for any purpose of his own. He has no desires to be fulfilled. He is *āpta kāma*. Though Madhva admits several other philoso-

phical categories as real, uncreated and eternal, they are not independent like the Lord. They are classified as dependent realities, including Lakṣmi. Madhva's admission of a plurality of reals does not make his system dualistic like Sāṅkhya, for in Sāṅkhya neither the Puruṣa nor the Prakṛti can be derived from either. Each is ultimate in itself. The Lord alone is the only free agent. He is immanent and also transcendent. The terms, freedom, independence, knowledge and power have a plenary significance only in respect of Him. Our freedoms are what he accords to us. These terms are applied to others in a restrictive sense. The dependence on the Lord is the characteristic of all the categories. Madhva criticises Rāmānuja's conception of the relation between God, souls and matter as unsatisfactory. The description that the relation is the relation as that between the body and souls cuts both the ways. It makes dependence reciprocal. The body is as much dependent on the soul, as the soul for his manifestation is dependent on the body. Madhva does not brook the Lord's dependence on anything nor the limitation of His power in any manner. The omnipotence of the Lord is the efficient cause of the world and is not its matter. The existence of many dependent reals besides Him does not militate against his greatness. "He is the eternal of the eternal and the life of all lives." The Lord is the efficient cause of the world and not its material cause. There are several eternal categories besides the Lord e.g. souls, *karma* matter, *ākāśa*, time, space etc. Though they are eternal they are in his power (*adhīna*). He is the bestower of *mokṣa* for the souls.

Madhva is a pluralist and a realist. He believes on the authority of the scriptures in the existence of infinite souls. Each is distinct and unlike one another. They are all atomic. They are classified into three classes: *sāttvikas*, *nitya-saṁsāris* and *tamoyogyas*. The nature of the soul is its *sva rūpa*. It is unchangeable and immutable. The *sattva* soul has no impurities. It is full of knowledge and goodness. The *sva rūpa* of the *nitya saṁsāris* is of a mixed nature. The nature of the *tamoyogyas* is always impure. The souls have karmic association always. Karma is *anādi*. The Lord puts the Karma into action and makes each soul reap the fruits of its action. Karma being inert cannot work by itself. The soul's association with appropriate bodies is called birth and its separation from the body is called death. The soul transmigrates in a series of rebirths. The purpose of taking on number of births is to get the *sādhana* necessary for realising mokṣa.

Mokṣa is the destiny of man. The beginningless association of Karma with soul is responsible for *saṁsāra*. The joys of *saṁsāra* are short-lived and conditioned. They are finite and diminishing in their value. They wear out with our age. Life is also full of sorrows. There is a way out of these troubles, a process of radically putting an end to suffering and realising a state of bliss and joy. That is called mokṣa. In mokṣa the individual attains and realises bliss i.e. *ānanda*. It is not all souls that are capable of attaining mokṣa but only the *sattva* soul. In the state of *bondage* which is real and beginningless, the soul has two covers which conceal the real nature of the soul from its vision. Mokṣa according to Madhva is the realisation and the immediate perception of the soul's real nature (*sva svarūpa*). This realisation has



to be achieved through the grace of the Lord which follows his vision.

In the philosophy of Madhva the spiritual aspirant is not kept in the dark about the nature or the method or *sāadhanā* for the realisation of mokṣa. The Lord is independent of all limitations, he can do what he likes or not do what he likes. This does not mean that the Lord is whimsical and arbitrary in his dispensations. Though He is utterly independent, out of His sweet choice He acts according to the injunctions of the Veda. Such action is in no way derogatory to His glory, independence or majesty. The Vedas describe the way, the spiritual aspirant should follow the path to obtain the grace of the Lord. The Lord does not give mokṣa to any or every body whom he likes, though he has the power to do so. He acts and it is His nature to act according to the behests of the Vedas. In short, grace is not gratuitously given to anybody by the Lord. He has to work for it. The Lord inspires the soul to work out the necessary amount of *sāadhanā*, before bestowing on him His grace. He makes him deserve the gift. Effort of the *jīva* is absolutely necessary, without it we cannot get mokṣa, nor can we get it *by it alone*. Effort and the *svaṛūpa* of soul are both necessary for mokṣa. The philosophy Śrī Madhva is not a type of fatalism where man needs do nothing at all, and all things are done by God. Effort has a prominent place and without the proper effort of the soul the Lord does not give his *prasāda*. Unstinted Bhakti and total self-surrender are necessary for the Grace of the Lord. Ceremonial purity and ethical excellence must be acquired by our Karma and Dharmic life. In the *Anuvyākhyāna* Madhva describes the immense *sāadhanā* that Brahma does for getting his spiritual

status. In another place, he states that man must make ceaseless effort in thinking of and loving the Lord all time, till the moment of exhaustion i.e. the overpowering point of sleep. Effort has a very important place in the realisation of Mokṣa. The bliss that one enjoys in Mokṣa has to be differentiated from heavenly pleasures. Svarga is the paradise in Hindu thought. In one of the Purāṇas the distinction between Mokṣa and Svarga is worked out in detail. In the cycle of births and deaths man reaps the fruits of the actions of one life, in another. The pleasures which we enjoy in paradise regale us for some time. They then pall on us and do not interest us. Secondly there is always the feeling, that the pleasures end by the time we expend our merit. The sword of Damocles is always hanging over our head. Thirdly, in heaven the sight of other souls enjoying greater pleasures than us, depresses us. And above all, in *Svarga* we have the consciousness that we are not making any progress in the path of our spiritual life and all that we are doing is to live the fruits of our past acts. We just stagnate, getting up, we lay waste our treasures. For these reasons, *Svarga* is not desired by spiritual aspirants. Mokṣa is called *niśreyas*. The Bliss in Mokṣa is eternal. It does not diminish, though Madhva admits gradations in the bliss enjoyed in Mokṣa by different souls, still the bliss a soul enjoys in Mokṣa is not tainted by jealousy. There is a supreme satisfyingness and content and the lack of the void in the bliss enjoyed by the soul in Mokṣa. There is peace and harmony in it. Dr. B. N. K. Sarma observes, "That inequality by itself cannot reduce the state of Mokṣa to the level of our own world. It is jealousy and other bad passions that lead to strife. We have instances where men

are heartily jealous of their equals and cannot tolerate the idea of another being their equal in wealth or fame." The differences in the bliss enjoyed in Mokṣa by souls is the corollary of their differences in their *svarūpa*.

The classification of the souls into three types and the assignment of some to eternal damnation, some to oscillate between birth and death perpetually, and some others to get Mokṣa, is likely to be criticised as exhibiting the partiality and indifference of the Lord. Madhva tackles this problem in a rational way. The Lord does not act in a mysterious manner about which we are kept in the dark. He does things out of his sweet will in accordance to the scripture. The nature of the *tamoyogyas* is such that they always act in an immoral manner and commit sins. The nature of the soul is unalterable. To so completely alter the soul, i.e. its very *svarūpa*, is to destroy it. The Lord does not do that. He does not arbitrarily assign the *tamoyogyas* to eternal damnation. He assigns them to eternal damnation only after the bad soul does all heinous sins and crimes. The Lord is not sentimental. He does not bypass the great Laws of morality. He does not punish or reward people without reference to their deserts. The Lord is not kind to the wicked. If the Lord is to be described as cruel because he punishes those who sin, such cruelty is acceptable to Madhva. The Lord is the upholder of the Moral Law. He does not act contrary to it. In the pursuance of the Moral Law if the Lord is kind to some and cruel to others that is not His defect. He does nothing in a whimsical manner. Each gets his desert. The heridity of man is fixed and all development works only in accordance with it. No development contrary to the original heridity is possi-



ble; even if it appears, it does not last long. Such total change is not possible. The doctrine of the three-fold souls is established by Madhva on the authority of Śruti and experience. Śrī Madhva cites the Gītā,

Ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattvasthāḥ  
Madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ  
jaghanyaguṇavṛttisthāḥ  
adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ (XIV-18)

Śrī Madhva, following Scriptures, describes Lord Viṣṇu as the prime category and Lakṣmī as the second. The third place is accorded to Vāyū. The scriptures when rightly interpreted give a graded hierarchy of the different Gods and also states that Vāyū takes on three incarnations, Hanūmān, Bhīma and Madhva to justify the ways of God to Man. Worship of the Lord must be conducted with reference to the *tāratamya*, order among Gods. If the deities are worshipped in the wrong order, with no reference to their status in hierarchy, it leads the devotee to hell. *Upāsana* must be according to *tāratamya*. The Lord's meditation is possible only after a rational conviction of philosophical truths (*niscita tattvas*) arrived at by *manana*. The truths learnt from the guru are to be rationally reflected and the counter arguments met. After this we get the convictions which cannot be assailed by any other school. It is such truths that are to be accepted. The doctrines are summarised for us in a popular verse attributed to Vyāsarāya.\*

\* This is called the *Navaratna-māla* of Madhva Philosophy.

श्रीमन्मध्वमते हरिः परतरः सत्यं जगत्तत्त्वतः  
भिन्ना जीवगणाः हरेरनुचरा नीचोच्चभावं गताः ॥  
मुक्तिर्नैकसुखानुभूतिरमला भक्तिश्च तत्साधनम्  
ह्यक्षादित्रितयं प्रमाणमखिलाग्नायेकवेद्यो हरिः ॥

Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is the highest independent philosophical category. He is not an abstract Absolute. He is the home of all infinite auspicious attributes and void of all defects. In short He is perfection.

The souls are infinite, they are creatures and followers of the Lord. No two souls are alike. There is the scheme of five-fold differences, i.e. difference between (1) *jīva* and *jīva*, (2) *jīva* and the Lord, (3) *jīva* and the world, (4) *jaḍa* and *jaḍa* and (5) God and *jaḍa*. This is the celebrated doctrine of the *pañca-bheda* of Śrī Madhva.

Madhva speaks movingly about *bhakti* and exhorts men to practise *bhakti* to the Lord through *jñāna* of his greatness. In his celebrated *Dvādaśa stotra* he writes, "Do your allotted duty and enjoy the fruits, offering them, in a spirit of humility, at the feet of Lord Hari. Lord Hari is the father, mother, and refuge of the world, Hari is the ultimate truth, Hari himself is our guru. There is none equal or superior to Him in the whole world; who is verily *Puruṣottama*. Why then worry about worldly things, bow down to the Lord." Śrī Madhva's God-love is the purest form of *bhakti*.

Śrī Madhva's reliance on scriptures is neither dogmatic nor blind. He makes use of the canons of interpretation and interprets the scriptures and then holds to it. Madhva's faith is not blind belief. It is the belief in the wisdom of the Vedās correctly understood.

The literature on Śrī Madhva's philosophy is vast and large. Śrī Madhva himself has to his credit thirty-seven works in all. They can be classified into three groups, (1) commentaries, (2) independent tracts, (3) devotional poems. He has commented on all the triple

texts. He has in all four works on the Vedānta Sūtras. The Sūtra Bhāṣya is a direct and terse commentary on the Sūtras. The second *Anuvyākhyāna* is also a commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras in the form of one thousand nine hundred verses. In this work Madhva refutes the doctrines of other philosophical systems with the help of logical arguments and scriptural statements. He also refutes the other schools of vedānta and their interpretation of triple texts. This tense work is explained in the majestic śāstraic style lucidly by one of the greatest post-Madhva thinkers, Jayatīrtha, in his *Nyāya sudha*. The third work of Madhva on the Sūtras is *Anubhāṣya*. This is a summary of the *Sūtra bhāṣya* for daily recitation. This is commented on by Śrī Rāghavendra. The fourth and the last work on the Sūtras by Madhva is *Nyāya vivarṇa*. It arranges the topics of the Sūtras in the form of *adhikaraṇas*.

Madhva has commented on all the ten Upaniṣads. He also wrote two works on the *Gītā Bhāṣya* and *Gītā Tātparya*. He has a commentary on the Bhāgavata. He has given us the summary and a correct interpretation of the Mahābhārata in his work called *Tātparya nirṇaya*.

He has explained in ten *prakaraṇas* the different doctrines of his system clearly. The saint-singers of Karnatak called Hari dāsas have given us moving devotional songs on the Philosophy of Śrī Madhva. Prominent among them are four Jagannatha, Purandara, Kanaka and Vijaya. A Sanskrit manual by name Madhva Siddhānta Sāra, gives us a concise account of the doctrines of Madhva.



## Chapter IX

### VALLABHA'S PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy associated with the name of Sri Vallabha is called *Śuddhādvaita*. It is a variety of Advaita, but not that type which Sri Śaṅkara set forth. The adjective *śuddha* i.e. pure, is intended to mark off Vallabha's monism from that of Śaṅkara.

Śaṅkara explains the world of apparent plurality by invoking the principle of *māyā*. *Māyā* suppresses the real nature of Brahman and shows off in its place the world of souls and things. The identity i.e. *advaya bhāva* asserted by Śaṅkara is not between the world of plurality as it is and Brahman. It is the unconditioned and non-delimited consciousness in objects and souls that is identical with Brahman. Ātman in the plural is not real, whereas Vallabha asserts identity between souls and Brahman without employing the principle of *māyā*. In his view the doctrine of *māyā* makes Advaita impure.

Like all great ācāryas, Vallabha too has a commentary on the *Brahma sūtras* called *Aṇubhāṣya*. He has an important commentary on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* called *Subodhinī*. His commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* is not complete. It covers only the first three chapters, two pādas and 33 sūtras and his second son Viṭhalanātha completed it. His great commentary on the *Bhāgavata* too is not complete. It covers the first three skandhas, a part of the fourth, the tenth and a part of the eleventh. He has not given us independent commentaries on the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads. He has some treatises dealing with various topics.

A special manual of the system is Giridhara's *Śudhādvaita mārtaṇḍa*.

The system is based like all the schools of Vedānta on the authority of the *śruti* i.e. revelation. The four basic authorities for the system are (1) The *Upaniṣads* (2) The *Gītā* (3) *Brahma sūtra* (4) The *Bhāgavata*. In the words of Prof. G. H. Bhatt of Baroda, a great scholar and a lucid exponent of the system, the *Bhāgavata* occupies a very important place in Vallabha's Philosophy. It is considered to be the treasure house of devotion, the fruit of the Vedas, and its language is the language of meditation.

The system of Vallabha is popularly called the *puṣṭi mārگا*. It emphasizes the importance of divine grace as the most powerful and unfailing means for the attainment of salvation. Salvation is possible only through grace and not through self-effort. The word *puṣṭi* means His grace (*poṣaṇam tadānugrahaḥ*). The system is an attempt to give a prominent place to devotion and still stick to a system of monistic metaphysics.

Like all great prophets Vallabha too had God-vision. He lived for some time in Vṛndāvan and Mathurā. Prof. R. G. Bhandarkar writes that "about the same time it is alleged that Gopāla Kṛṣṇa manifested himself on the Govardhana hill by the name of Devandamana, also called Śrī-Nāthaji. God asked Vallabha in a dream to come and see him. Vallabha went and saw Śrī Nāthaji. Śrī Nāthaji commanded him to erect a shrine for himself and to promulgate the method of worshipping him, without which a man would not be admissible to the *puṣṭi mārگا*, or the path of divine grace, which Vallabha had founded."

Vallabha connected his system into a particular manifestation of Kṛṣṇa called Śrīnāthaji. Some hold the opinion that Vallabha's system is influenced by the theory of one Viṣṇuswāmi. But there is no conclusive evidence for it.

The central category in the philosophy of Vallabha is Brahman. He is an independent reality. His nature is *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. He is himself perfection and there is nothing besides Him independent. All the things in the world are his *real* manifestations. Brahman is viewed under different aspects by Vallabha. The concept of *Puruṣottama* is the highest one. Here we do not have the *nirguṇa Brahman* of Śaṅkara. The most perfect aspect is that of a Supreme Personality. The supreme reality is described as the most perfect person. He is existence, knowledge and bliss. He is the best of beings. He is the very image of sweetness (*rasa*). That is His form. He is no other than Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is the divine form of Brahman. He through His power which is called *māyā* can become anything He likes. He is omniscient and omnipotent. He has many powers e.g., knowledge, action, evolution and involution. He sometimes combines contradictory qualities. There is nothing impossible for Him. The entire creation of the world is His real manifestation.

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Vallabha believes in *pariṇāma vada* i.e., the doctrine of transformation. The cause and the effect both are real for Vallabha. The transformation here is not of the *prakṛti* which is insentient. Nor is the transformation illusory (*vivarta*) as in Śaṅkara. According to Śaṅkara the cause and the effect do not belong to the same order of reality (*samānasattā*). The effect is an illusory manifestation of the cause. Nothing that



happens to the effect affects the cause. The cause and the effect are non-distinct but are not identical for Vallabha. God is the material and the efficient cause. The effect is dependent on the cause. It is real. Speaking about His nature Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "This māyā of mine is divine, it is impossible for one to extricate oneself from it." The Upaniṣad refers to the Lord as the great *māyīn*.

While the Lord undergoes all the transformations he is not affected. Vallabha's doctrine is called *avikṛta pariṇāmavāda*. Vallabha's concept is based on the *Muṇḍakā* analogy of the spider and its self-drawing web and the blazing fire and the multitude of sparks which spring from it. The *Puruṣottama* is declared by the *Gītā* as being higher than the *kṣara* and *akṣara*, i.e. perishable and the imperishable. He is full of *ānanda* and *rasa* i.e., sweetness and joy. He is in fact the undivided mass of bliss.

The second aspect of Brahman is his immanence. Vallabha's theism is not deism. God is not external to the world. He does not create the world and leave it there, as a mechanic a machine. God is not an outsider who is brought in to inaugurate the world and is not expected to attend to its daily workings. God is not only above us, but is with us and in us. It is not true to think that God's august majesty has very little connection with the petty concerns of humble human beings. God, according to Vallabha, is manifest as the inner-ruler, *antaryāmin*, of the souls of men. A whole section of the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* explains the immanence of the Lord (III. 7). "He who dwells in all beings, is yet within all beings whom no beings know." The *Gītā* too again and again refers to this aspect. The Lord says that "he is seated in all

beings." He is the drive in all men. The Lord is not witnessing the drama of life from the wings of the stage. "He is the enjoyer of all sacrifices and austerities, the great Lord of the world, *the friend of all beings* (*suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām*). He is actively with us, sustaining us.

This does not mean that Vallabha's system is a type of pantheism which makes God one with the universe as a whole. God and the universe are not equated. God minus the universe is not zero. It is still God. Pantheism and deism do not leave any room for prayer or miracles or freedom of will. Vallabha's God is not that vague something of which Wordsworth speaks.

"Something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of the setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of thoughts,  
All rolls through all things'."

It is immanent as well as transcendent. Besides the two aspects of Brahman as *Puruṣottama* and *antaryāmin*, there is a third one which is the specific contribution of Vallabha. It is called the *akṣara* Brahman. It is from this that all objects manifest themselves like sparks from the fire. It is meditated on by the devotees. It is considered as the first aspect of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is variously called *paramadhāman*, *vyoma* and *charana*. The *akṣara* Brahman appears as Akṣara, time, action and nature. These four eternal principles are one with God. The aspect of Brahman is described as *avyakta* in the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads. It is lower than *Puruṣottama*. The whole universe is

the manifestation of this principle. Vallabha explains his metaphysics with the help of 28 *tattvas* (categories) and in the three inseparable principles and different forms of the Lord i.e. Kāla, Karma and Svabhāva. The categories are not the same as in the Sāṅkhya system. They have different significance for Vallabha.

The universe and the souls are the real manifestations of the Lord. They are not the products of nescience or *māyā* as in Śaṅkara's philosophy. The Lord becomes, as pointed out in the Upaniṣads, many in order to sport. The whole creation is His *līlā*, i.e. the *sub-specia-temporis* view. What is responsible for our ignorance, dependence, inferiority, suffering of all miseries, is ego-sense (*mamatā* and *aham̐tā*), attachment to the things of the world and the consequent round of births and deaths. The individual souls fail to see God as the supreme cause.

All the souls are not of one type. They are classified under three heads. The first class of souls are those who are perfect clods of earth untouched by the spirit! They are those that "do not look before and after," but live in the perpetual perishing particular present. They are given to worldly pursuits and mundane aspirations. They are not awakened to the existence of the Lord or His glory. Such souls are called the *Pravāha* type.

The second type of souls is better in its moral and spiritual stature. They are correct in their behaviour. They are followers of the Vedic path. They need nothing more than the laws laid down by the Vedas and Dharma Śāstrās (Law books of morality). They walk in that path. They follow the letter of the Lord. They live their divine life in an orderly manner.



They perform all the scripture-ordained duties. The souls are atomic, eternal, real, and non-different from the Lord. They are *aṁśas* (parts) of the Lord in the language of the *Gītā*. The soul's connection with the body is called its birth and its separation death. The conscious principle in the body is the soul i.e., a part of God. It is the agent getting knowledge. It is the principle of intelligence acting according to its Karma.

The purpose of the cosmic drama is the pleasure of the Lord. It is intended to serve the enjoyment of the Lord and the liberation of the souls. For these assumptions faith and revelation are the ultimate authority. Logic can never get the better of faith here.

The souls are all not of one variety. They are all atomic. In them all the six excellences of the Lord are suppressed. The element of *ānanda* is not present. This leads the soul to bondage. Bondage is the result of wrong knowledge. The souls do not see "Vāsudeva in all the objects of the world." They do not see the real *jagat* or the universe as the real non-different manifestation of the Lord. They look upon the world as consisting of things and different souls as independent entities. They have a scientific view of things. They do the duties that are obligatory to their class and station in life (*varṇa* and *āśrama*). They stick to the doctrine of Svadharma. They worship the Lord in the manner prescribed. They treat the Lord as one of great majesty and approach him with all respect and form. They keep to forms and observe all the rituals. They acquire ceremonial purity and ethical perfection before they begin to worship the Lord. Theirs is the path of Bhakti. It is called by Vallabha the *maryādā mārga*.

The path of Bhakti enjoins the observance of a number of restrictions. It is not open to all classes. It is a graduated path, where the aspirant has to secure at each stage his eligibility for the next step.

The *bhakta* experiences an awe in the presence of the Lord. The *Bhāgavata* speaks of nine types of Bhakti. The boy devotee Prahlāda says, "This I consider the best lesson, worthy to be learnt; man should practice devotion to the Lord, marked by nine characteristics, (1) listening to the Lord's song, (2) singing His glory, (3) contemplation of Him, (4) worshipping, (5) falling at His feet, (6) saluting Him, (7) serving Him like a servant, (8) moving as friend and (9) self-dedication. These stages are in the ascending order and the conclusion of it is God-Love. This pathway to God secures the union with the Lord. This attainment is considered by Vallabha as the supreme one.

He outlines a unique path-way to God-realisation called the *puṣṭi mārga*. It is open to all. God in his sweet will elects some to play with Him. He brings some souls from Himself and gives them a divine body like His and sports with them. This is called *nitya-līlā*. The souls enjoy *svarūpānanda* or the *bhajānanda* of the Lord.

Puṣṭi or grace of the Lord is His gift. Some souls enjoy it. They are God-intoxicated. They abandon themselves to the divine in all aspects of life. They have no ego or purpose of their own. They become perfect instruments of the Lord for working out his purposes. There is not even the least element of self-hood in them. They do not care to observe caste-rules or minute scripture regulations as and when it interferes with their Love of God. They are the mystics of the world. They live in this world on a different

plane. They look upon the Lord as the supreme *rāsa* and they actually enjoy His company. Their Love has no sensuality. It is *Prema* and not *Kāma*. They want to delight the Lord. All their activities are dedicated to the Lord. They look upon the Lord as their Master.

Vallabha regards the love of the Gopis of Vṛndāvan as the best type of devotion. They are the ideal and typical *bhaktas* of the Lord. Theirs is a total and integral surrender to the Lord. The Gopis are regarded as the spiritual teachers of the *puṣṭi mārگا*. They regard themselves as the brides of the Lord. They speak the language of passionate love. God is regarded as the great lover and the human beings as his bride. This type of bridal mysticism has given rise to very fine literature in the world. The *rāsa līlā* described in the *Bhāgavata* must not be misunderstood. The *sva-rūpānanda* realised by the Gopis is regarded by Vallabha as superior to *Brahmānanda*. The true God-lover can never bear separation from the Lord. The misery of separation makes the devotee think of Him all the time. The devotee's love of the Lord is supreme.

Those who follow the *puṣṭi mārگا* offer everything they do to the Lord. One who follows the *puṣṭi* path aspires to be a Gopi and worships the Lord. The *puṣṭi mārگا* of Vallabha has warmed the love of God in all of us. It has introduced the human element in religion. It has stressed not only the divinity of man but also the humanity of God.

Tagore in many verses of his immortal *Gītānjali* expresses this type of love for God. He sets out in great detail God's love of man in his Hibbert lectures on the Religion of Man. The celebrated songs of Mīrā



are an illustration of this type of *bhakti*. One has to guard oneself from the touches of sensuality in such an approach.

Vallabha regards the final union with the Lord as *mokṣa*. He distinguishes several degrees in it. He asks the perfect devotee to partake of the Lord's *līlā*, and regards that as the perfect form of realisation. Such an attitude leads to a respect for creation and tends to a fine type of humanism.

The *puṣṭi mārṅa* is the most exalted state of human beings' love for the Lord. The genuine God lovers in the first two phases of their adventure, seeking of and separation from the Lord, experience the full play of all the fine human emotions. They have a painful intense longing (*autsukya*), a despondency (*nirveda*) arising from long-drawn-out fulfilment. They then fall into deep dejection (*dainya*). Again they wake up to anger towards the object they love (*amarṣa*). In the language of Sanskrit poetics the devotee experiences all the *sanchāri bhāvās* of love.

When the seeking of the Lord and the separation are ended, there is the great union which lifts the soul beyond all joys. He is elated with joy. It is the stage of *mada*. He feels gratified (*dhṛti*). In the language of the *Bhāgavata*, "this overpowering joy fills the eyes of the devotee with tears, his voice gets choked, he breaks down, laughs, sings, and dances." In another verse the author of the *Bhāgavata* asks us: "Of what use is any Bhakti in which your voice does not break, eyes do not moisten, hairs do not horripilate, and you are not able to proceed? If one good devotee could go about in this divine madness, now weeping, now laughing, without any shame, sing and dance, verily such a Bhakta will sanctify the whole world."

Vallabha's theism brings out that particular form of Bhakti which is based on love. He has ample support for his position in the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*. His system makes an attempt to set forth a type of monism without the māyā doctrine. The system affords full play to all the aspects of devotion to the Lord. The system gathers all the fine points and merits of a full-blooded theism. Its monistic metaphysics is pressed into the service of his theism. It is difficult to say whether a perfect logical reconciliation between a monistic metaphysics and a personalistic theism is possible.

## Chapter X

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF ŚRĪ CHAITANYA

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the great religious reformer and the supreme example among God lovers, established a powerful school of theistic Vedānta in Bengal at the same time as Vallabha. He did not comment on any scripture or write any books. He spoke from his deep and abiding religious experience. He believed in the reality of the world and conceived ultimate reality as the perfect supreme personal God—Kṛṣṇa. He also did not believe in the identity between the Lord and the soul, like the Advaitin. He viewed the relationship between the soul and the Lord as one of identity-in-difference. The relationship is indescribable. It is an *acintyābhedābheda*. Some regarded Chaitanya as a close follower of the dualistic philosophy of Madhva. It is partly true to say so. He has his differences with Madhva's system. Dr. Sushil Kumar Maitra in his splendid article on Chaitanya makes out that the system is "a type of idealistic monism which reconciles all contradictions and dualities in a super-logical unity or in a whole that surpasses strict logical comprehension."

Chaitanya refutes *māyā vāda* and also Śaṅkara's conception of a Nirguṇa Brahman. The conception of the Lord as the supreme personality i.e., Kṛṣṇa has some significant aspects to be noted. The Lord and his consort are not viewed as majestic and with reverence. There is no aloofness between the Lord and the soul. There is an intimate personal relationship with the Lord. Chaitanya and to some extent Vallabha seek to realise not the glory and greatness of the



Lord but his *sweet intimate personal relationship* called the *mādhurya rūpa*. The Lord takes on the human form and lives and sports among human beings. This type of fellowship with the Lord is regarded as the highest by Chaitanya. The ideal spiritual aspirant is Rādhā. All of us who hope to realise the intimate fellowship with the Lord should aspire to the condition of Rādhā. What is sought to be realised is not the *aiśvarya rūpa* of the Lord but *mādhurya rūpa*.

Chaitanya brings out the passionate longing of man for God-realisation. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa concept gave him the necessary emotion for preaching the concept of God-love. He preached *prema-bhakti* and adopted the method of singing with his disciples. He took to the method of *kīrtan* and *bhajan*. He developed the emotional side of men and drew the hearts of men to God by fervently singing the songs about the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in his *kīrtans*. He drew large numbers from all sects including Muslims and women. He cried down the hide-bound rituals of the high-born Brahmins. He condemned all caste distinctions. He went on pilgrimage to several shrines.

Chaitanya who is also called *Gaurāṅga* because of his fair body married twice and after sometime took to *samnyāsa*. With the help of his brother Nityānanda, and a former teacher of his Advaitācārya, he spread the doctrines and founded maths all over India, particularly in the North. The last 18 years of his life he spent at Puri and died there.

Chaitanya believed, like the majority of the Hindus, in the power of the name of the Lord. The name of the Lord is considered as all-powerful in its potency. It works miracles. The doctrine of speaking

out the name of the Lord and singing it out is the great spiritual heritage of all the mystics of India that wrote in their own regional languages. It has a definite place in the writing of all mystics and saints. It is found in Tulsi, Kabīr, Tukārām, Jñānadeva, Ekanāth, Mīrā, Narsi Mehta.

The love of uttering the name of the Lord silently is called *japa* and doing it loudly is *kirtana*. The name of the Lord is not a nonsensical sound. A word and its meaning are closely associated. A name represents the qualities of an object. If we persevere in our repetition of a word, it leads us to meditation on it. We cannot keep on repeating any word, without thinking about the reality it represents.

Distraction is the normal and the natural state of the unregenerate mind of man. We are rarely capable of consecutive thought about any one problem in all our waking life. All the time our minds are in a state of reverie—"a mental fog, disconnected sense impressions, irrelevant memories, nonsensical ideas from books etc. The constant, continued repetition of the name of the Lord brings us to think about the Lord. The utterance of the name is like a gentle plucking at our sleeve, demanding back our attention. Sometimes it is done with rosary."

It is sheer intellectual perversion to regard the repetition of Lord's name as a mechanical, thoughtless occupation of the simple folk. Nor is it a useless, trifling and dreary occupation. The name sinks down into our life and becomes powerful. The devotees regard that the best thing a man can do is "to take refuge in His name." The Christian testament declares: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." The repetition

of the holy word is a great comfort to the distressed and violently disturbed mind of man. It has a real and literal significance for those who believe in the Lord. The significance of the Lord's name is the seed for the true growth of *bhakti*. Every name of the Lord is based on some attribute or other of the Lord, declares the *Viṣṇusahasranāma*. Every name of the Lord marks off some exploit or action or quality of the Lord. The names of the Lord are recited even today in many temples.

'The thousand names of the Lord' (*sahasranāma*) is a very important chapter of the *Mahābhārata*. The pathway to God in our iron age (*kaliyuga*) is declared to be the name of the Lord. In the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*, off and on it is declared, "in Kali, the name of the Lord alone is the means; there is no other path." The Prince of patience, the chief of the Pāṇdavas, listens to all the dharmas and does not feel satisfied. He asked Bhīṣma: "What do you consider to be the greatest dharma of all dharmas? By reciting what will there be liberation from the cycle of births and deaths?" Bhīṣma replied that the repetition of the thousand names of the Lord is superior to all dharmas. That is the way *Viṣṇusahasranāma* is given to us.

Most of the great Vedāntic ācāryas like Śaṅkara, Madhva have commented on the *Viṣṇusahasranāma*. Śaṅkara, the Prince of monistic metaphysics, brings out the unique nature and excellence of the *nāma* in his commentary. The adoration and the recital of the name of the Lord affects none. It is called an *ahimsā yoga*. We need no material goods or great learning sincerely to recite the name of the Lord. It is open to one and all. The *Bhāgavata* is full of the glory of His name. Chaitanya Mahāprabhu regards the name itself



as the Lord. Hence the importance of *bhajan* and *kīrtan*.

I have endeavoured to explain the importance of the Lord's name at such length only to lay bare the psychological foundations of the path. The swing-armchair speculative philosopher and the irreverent sceptic and nihilist can see no good in the recitation of the Lord's name. God help him.

A collection of ten basic verses (*daśa-mūla-śloka*) attributed to Chaitanya gives us a precise account of his philosophy. The system, like other Vedāntic systems, believes in the authority of the Vedas. Reasoning and Logic are accepted when they do not conflict with the Vedas.

The supreme spiritual Reality is called Hari. He represents the whole Reality. His nature is a combination of six essences, *Beauty, Majesty, Strength, Glory, Detachment* and *Perfect Intelligence* (*śrī, aiśvarya, vīrya, yaśas, vairāgya* and *jñāna*). Of these, beauty is the fundamental one and others are subsidiary. Hari is completeness and perfection. Others are only fractions of Him.

Hari as pointed out is a duality in unity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Besides the three Upanishadic attributes of *sat, cit* and *ānanda*, Hari is full of *rasa* and is a *rasika* (enjoyment and enjoyer). God creates the world out of his *māyā śakti*. It is his creation. This *māyā śakti* makes the individual soul forget its true nature and acquire a taste for the sweets of life.

Hari besides the *māyā śakti* has a power called the *cit śakti* or the *svarūpa śakti*. This power has three aspects *sāndhini, samvit* and *hatādini*. By the use of these qualities the Lord sports and enjoys his

and other beings' pleasures. He sports with his pure body (*śuddha sattva*).

The souls (*jīvas*) attain their union but not unity with the Lord through *prema bhakti*. The love of God is *prema* and is not lust (*kāma*). Lust or *kāma* seeks its satisfaction. *Prema* seeks the Lord's satisfaction. The relation between the individual soul and the Lord is described as the relation between the sparks and the fire. The Love of the Lord is regarded as an end in itself. It is called the supreme human ideal. The various powers of the Lord are unthinkable. The Lord does not in his substantial aspect undergo any transformation. His powers undergo a good deal of transformations. It is a sort of *śakti pariṇāma vāda*.

Chaitanya's system does not give us strictly a logical account of the relation between Brahman and the soul. It describes it as the incomprehensible relation of difference and identity (*acintya-bhedābheda*).

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## Chapter XI

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF ŚAIVA SIDDHĀNTA

The theistic interpretation of Vedānta has taken on two forms. The schools of philosophy that have followed Rāmānuja have regarded Viṣṇu or Lord Nārāyaṇa as the ultimate Reality. We have examples of this in the schools of Madhva, Vallabha and Chaitanya.

The theistic Vedānta has taken on a second form in South India called *Śaiva-siddhānta*. This system along with other types of Śaivism, looks upon Śiva as the ultimate Reality. They call their ultimate Reality as Rudra, Śiva, Śaṅkara, Mahādeva, Hara, and Īśvara. Śaivism has taken on three forms. (1) The *Śaiva-siddhānta* of South India. (2) The rigorous type of Śaivism called *Vīraśaivism* found in North Karnataka and Mysore. (3) The *Pratyabhijñā* school of Śaivism prevalent in Kashmir. This school has great affinities with the Advaita of Śaṅkara. The first two schools are pluralistic, realistic and theistic in their outlook and identify the supreme Reality with Śiva.

The Śaiva-siddhānta is the most popular religion in the South. It is a form of personalistic theism that makes devotion to the Lord the supreme means to attain Him. The grace of the Lord is essential for Mokṣa. The system has given rise to an excellent body of devotional literature in Tamil, the regional language of South India. It is poetry, mysticism and religion combined into a unity.

Unlike the theistic schools of Vedānta that look upon Nārāyaṇa as ultimate Reality, this school has for its basic texts not the Upaniṣads or the *Gītā* but



the mystical writings of the great Śaiva saints. Tradition enumerates the names of sixty-three saints. They are called *nāyanārs* or *aḍiyārs* i.e. the servants of God. The outpourings of these God-intoxicated saints are the chief *pramāṇas* for South Indian Śaivism. The saints correspond to the *Ālvārs* of the Rāmānuja school. They are from all communities. Religion was not confined to those who knew Sanskr̥t. The language of the masses became the language of religion. Of these saints five are very prominent. The earliest of them is one Tirumūlar, and his work *Tirumandiram* is the great classic of Śaivaite mysticism. In a celebrated verse he has declared the identity of love and God after the manner of St John's gospel. "God is love, and who loveth not, the same knoweth not God." He writes, "Ignorant people distinguish between God and Love and wisdom lies in identifying the two (Śiva and *aṇbu*)."

There are four other saints who have written two collections of hymns. The *Tevāram* is the collection of hymns of Appar, Śambandar and Sundaramūrti. The *Tiruvācakam* is the work of Māṇikka Vācakar. The last mentioned work is the treasure house of devotional poetry giving out the yearnings of the human soul and its relation to the Lord. He declares that surrender to the Lord is the process of regeneration; "the days of unsundered existence are as good as being unborn." St. Augustine declared: "If I am not in thee, I am not all." St. Paul adds: "Whether we live or whether we die, we are in the Lord."

Besides these mystical writings, the philosophical basis in a systematic manner is developed in the writings of Meyanḍadeva, Arulnandi-Śivācārya and

Umāpati. The basic literature consists of the 12 sūtras in Meykanda's work *Śiva-jñāna-bodham*. Other works of importance are *Śiva jñāna-siddhiyar* (a detailed systematic treatise) and *Śiva-prakāśam*. Independent treatises in English are mostly the doctorate theses on the systems. We have excellent accounts of the system in the articles on the system by Prof. S. Sūryanārāyaṇa Sastrī and Dr. T. M. P. Mahādevan.

There are three important philosophical categories in the system. God (*pati*), souls (*paśu*) and the bondage (*pāśa*). The religious basis of the system is completely theistic.

God is the central independent category. He is no other than Śiva. He is superior to the other gods Viṣṇu and Brahma. He is also identified with Rudra. He is not the indeterminate Absolute of Śāṅkara. He can be known, for he has infinite auspicious attributes. His nature does not partake of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. He is *aprākṛta*. He is transcendent as well as immanent. Śaiva-siddhānta is not a form of *pantheism*. This system does not accept the concept of *avatāra*. Śiva has never any direct touch with *Prakṛti*. They admit that Śiva takes on several forms to protect his disciples. The forms he takes are of the nature of His *grace* and not material forms.

Śiva as the ultimate Reality is conceived under two aspects. There is his *being* i.e., *Sat* and his power *Śakti* which is inseparable from him. He is referred severally in all the three genders as *Śivaḥ*, *Śivā* and *Śivam*. He has eight attributes: (1) independence, (2) purity, (3) self-knowledge, (4) omniscience, (5) freedom from impurity, (6) boundless benevolence, (7) omnipotence and (8) bliss. The supreme Lord Śiva is more than the universe. In respect of the

creation of the world Śiva is only an operative cause and is not an instrumental cause. The instrumental cause for the creation of the world is Śiva's power or *Śakti*. *Māyā* or *Prakṛti* is the material cause. Śiva does not directly act upon it. The evolution of the world does not affect Him in any way. He does not undergo transformations. He is immutable. He has five functions to discharge. They are the usual three, creation, preservation and destruction. To these three two more are added, obscuration and grace.

The entire creation is the manifestation of Śiva's power. It is his sport. The purpose of the universe is to save the souls from bondage through His grace. The world is the moral theatre for the soul to attain the grace of Śiva. The souls are infinite and they need physical accompaniments and the material basis for their life. *Māyā*, which is the material cause for all things, evolves bodies, organs, worlds and objects of enjoyment for the soul. *Māyā* evolves as many as thirty-six categories. They are of two orders: (1) certain evolutes are from pure *Māyā* (2) others are from impure *Māyā*.

Śiva directly acts on pure *Māyā* and produces the five Śiva *tattvas* i.e. categories. The other categories are derived from impure *Māyā*. It is acted on by Śiva's power. All the other categories are material after the manner of the *Śāṅkhya*. All the entities are explained as coming from *Māyā* in its two aspects. The souls in this system are infinite and are in their true nature omniscient. They are infected in the stage of bondage by the three types of impurities. They are respectively called *anava*, *karma* and *māyā*. The first is responsible for deluding the soul from a true conception of its real nature. It produces in the



soul the delusion that it is atomic. It screens Reality from the souls and gives it a distorted view. The second impurity results from the deeds of the soul and its fruits. The third type of impurity endows the soul with physical adjuncts and a psycho-physical organism. Another distinguishing character of the soul in this system is that it takes on the nature of the entity with which it is associated. Its activities reflect the impurity with which it is in touch. The three impurities are like the bran, husk and the sprout of the paddy. The individual soul is like the body of the Lord. It is in inseparable relation with God, but yet it is distinct. The soul is never identical with the Lord. It is always distinct even in release. There is an unmistakable pluralistic strain in the system. The system describes the relation between the Lord and souls as one of non-difference. It does not signify identity or oneness as in Śaṅkara. It only means that Śiva is non-separate and inseparable, but yet distinct and different from the souls.

The souls are in three states in their existence. At the time of *pralaya*, i.e., the dissolution of the world, the soul exists without bondage of *Māyā*. This class of souls is called *pralayākala*. With the advent of evolution, as the result of *karma* the soul gets bound by all the three types of impurities. This class of souls is called *Sakala jīva*. With the effort of spiritual discipline, some souls get rid of the two impurities and await the grace of the Lord which removes the third. This secures them *Mokṣa*. This class is called *Vijñanakala* souls.

The conception of *Mokṣa* in Śaiva-siddhānta is graded and each stage corresponds to a particular discipline. The supreme method is the conscious un-

reserved, total surrender to Śiva as the sole protector. Bhakti has several stages, different forms and many steps leading to different grades. The name of the Lord is to be uttered. A certain type of discipline called the *caryā mārga* asks us to engage ourselves in the activities that are helpful to people to worship the Lord. With the unquestioning single mindness of a devotee, the aspirant engages himself in securing flowers for the Lord, cleanses the temple, fetches water, prepares food etc. This is the path of the faithful servant i.e., *dāsa mārga*. This discipline leads the soul to the residence of the Lord (*sāloka*). A perfect humility and an unconquerable faith in the saving grace of the Lord is necessary for this type of quiet self-effacing devotion. The mystical writing of Appar is the example of this path.

The third form is the treatment of the Lord as the parent and expresses an intimate affection for the Lord. This path also consists in activities of an external nature; but the activities are not done in a spirit of awe, but with a warmth of feeling. The path is that of the dutiful son who does the will of the Lord. This is called the *sat putra mārga*. This leads us to the nearness of the Lord, *sāmīpya*. The mystic Sambandhar gives expression to this type of God-love.

The third form is the treatment of the Lord as a close friend. There is the sweet, human and personal touch in this kind of devotion. It is called the *sakhya bhāva*. It makes us God-like (*sārūpya*). The mystic Sundarar has sung of this type of devotion in his hymns.

These three paths prepare us for the ultimate form of God-realisation called the *san-mārga*. This leads us to Reality straight. It is called *sāyujya* i.e.,

union with God. Māṇikka Vācakar exemplifies this type of *bhakti* at its best.

The student of Indian theism finds close parallels to these types of devotion in the theology of Rāmānuja and Vallabha. The Siddhānta lays stress on all the three aspects of spiritual discipline: ceremonial purity, ethical excellence and spiritual love of God. It is within the reach of all. The system envisages the possibility of realising God's grace even in this life. Such souls are called *Jīvanmuktās*.



## Chapter XII

### VEDĀNTA—THE PHILOSOPHY FOR OUR TIMES

The secular and spiritual savants of humanity are agreed that the present world order is defective to the core and if it is not set right and pulled out of the slough, it means not merely the downfall of our present civilisation and its cherished values but also the extermination of the human race itself. The secular prophets are divided in their opinion and are in different minds about the prognosis they suggest for the regeneration of our civilisation.

The Marxians stand up for a classless society and plump for the emergence of international communism. The anti-Marxians declare that a few bombs dropped on Kremlin would establish a new social order. This is the fairy tale at the core of the military armaments programme. A few plead for the control of the atomic energy. Yet others believe that if we give up our outmoded ways of thinking and living and employ large-scale scientific techniques, paradise would be round the corner. The latest gospel is science. The emergence of a new social order is expected to result from a few waves of the scientific wand.

There are the pessimists and the alarmists who tell us that disaster is certain and that all human effort is of no avail. They make the morbid assumption that we are the victims of a fate over which we have no control. There is the optimist and the ostrich. One looks to chance and hopes that something will turn up and the other does not face facts and hides his head in the dug-out.

The conflict between expert opinions and the clash of ideologies create a crisis in men's mind. The division among the instructed nullifies their authority and the average individual finds it difficult to follow any. In the words of A. N. Whitehead, "Slow drift is accepted but, when for human experience quick changes appear, human nature passes into hysteria. In such times, while for some heaven dawns, for others hell yawns open." But most of the secular leaders do not admit the efficacy of religion.

Fenelon writes: "There is practically nothing men do not prefer to God; a tiresome detail of business, an occupation utterly pernicious to health, the employment of time in ways one does not dare to mention, anything rather than God." Oscar Wilde exclaimed on reading the *Bible*: "When I think of all the harm that that book has done, I despair of ever writing anything equal to it." The contemporary indifference and challenge to religion is based on two grounds. The findings of religion are declared to be dogmatic and opposed to the spirit of reason and scientific inquiry. The practical results of religion have been horrible. They have added to the misery of men, defended class-interests and at times have tried to justify social injustice in terms of the will of God. Men of religion fly away in the face of social agonies and seek their individual salvation. Many religious imposters have exploited the masses in the name of religion. George Eliot declared, "'Heaven help us,' said the old religion, the new one, from the very lack of that faith teaches us all to help one another." In the words of Nicholas Berdyaev, "Men set themselves to hate in the cause of love, to use compulsion in the name of freedom and to become practising mate-

rialists for the inculcation of spiritual principles." Lucretius sums up the case against religion for the moderns. In his view religion is a disease born of fear and is the source of untold misery to the human race.

The contemporary challenge affects only the wrong type of religions that are dishonest. Militant atheism is the right answer to dishonest religions. The mysticism of Śāṅkara is at once scientific and humanistic. It alone has the chance of being an effective universal religion. It takes up the challenge and lays the unshakable foundation for spiritual religion.

He shifts the centre of gravity in religion from authority to experience. Brahman-realisation is the direct and immediate consciousness of Reality. It is not a dogmatic declaration that we have from a second or tenth hand. First, we posit Brahman as a working hypothesis and affirm it with all our being in our spiritual experience. It is empirical in the plenary sense of the term. 'Experience' is not merely to be confined to what the senses report. It is not only objective but subjective also. The philosophic intuition that is *sākṣātkāra* enables us to realise Brahman. Such a realisation is the ultimate test of the existence of Brahman. The realisation is not an external revelation as in dogmatic and prophetic religions. Here, there is no need for the thunder or the burning bush of Moses, or the revealing tempest as in Job or the angel Gabriel of Mohammed. The kingdom of God is within. "That thou art", declares the Upaniṣad. It is not the base rapture of the slave before the mighty, that has overawed him for ever. It is not a product. It is the realisation of the essential non-composite universal nature of man. It affirms the fundamental oneness of Reality. Ātman is universal and one. Man



attains to such an experience through intense *Jñāna*. All other modes help us only indirectly. *Mokṣa* according to Śaṅkara is not *derivative*. It is *native* to the soul of man. It is the birthright of man. It is merely making known what is essential in man. It is for all and everyone. Śaṅkara's religion stands for *sarvamukti*. He is a spiritual democrat. Here we do not have the conceptions of eternal damnation or the pleasures of the paradise. Nor do we have distinctions of the elect and the damned. Here we do not have the need for an intermediary between God and man.

Śaṅkara does not regard man as a fallen creature tied down to a body of lust without any glimmer of divinity. There is no hiatus between God and man, as in dogmatic theologies. The two, God and man, are con-substantial. It is all one spirit that vivifies. Śaṅkara affirms the dignity and divinity of man by his conception of Brahman and its affirmation through spiritual realisation.

The realisation is not to be at a distant date or in a different place. It is transformed life. It can be had here and now in the human body. Those who have it in the physical frame when they are alive are called *jīvanmuktas*. Spiritual experience is trans-intellectual and not instinctive. It is a non-relational way of knowing. Śaṅkara does not condemn reasoning but wants us to use it where it is applicable. He declared that he criticised other doctrines to enable men to reject false views and not out of interest in discussion as such.<sup>1</sup> He condemns *kutarka* and not helpful Logic. He often defends his metaphysical position not from mere quotations from scriptures,

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1. *Praśna Bhāṣya*, IV, 3.

but also with arguments from reason.<sup>2</sup> He declares in one place that the statement "intellect stands condemned" must be established by intellect itself.<sup>3</sup> He never asks us to accept any scriptural truth that goes against the deliverances of perception. He writes that even if a hundred *śrutis* declare that fire is cold and without light, we cannot accept it.<sup>4</sup>

Further, we find in pre-Śaṅkara, Śaṅkara and post-Śaṅkara Advaita dialectics the logical refutation of the absolute validity of the categories of relational and mediate knowledge. The categories like cause-effect relation, substance, attribute, inherence, relation are convicted of self-contradiction and other logical fallacies.<sup>5</sup>

It is the spiritual realisation of the *fundamental oneness* of Reality that makes us feel effectively the truth of the fellowship of men. To the Advaitin the concept of the brotherhood of man is not a social exhortation nor a mere doctrine. It is proved on his pulse. It is only men who have this experience, that can be real humanists. Others who talk about it have no roots for their feelings. It becomes merely a convention or a habit with them. At the end of his Indian tour Dr. Paul Deussen said to a gathering at Bombay: "The gospels quite correctly establish as the highest law of morality, 'love your neighbour as yourselves'. But why should I do so, since by the order of nature I feel pain and pleasure only in myself not in my neighbour? The answer is not in the Bible.....but it is in the Veda, in the great formula 'that art thou'

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2. *Sūtra Bhāṣya*, II, 2, 1.

3. *Ibid* II, II, 1.

4. *Gītā Bhāṣya*, Chap. XVIII, V. 66.

5. See Maṇḍana, Vācaspati, Śrī Harṣa, Citsukhācārya and Madhusūdana.

which gives in three words the combined sum of metaphysics and morals. You shall love your neighbour as yourself because you are your neighbour.”

The men who have had the spiritual experience work for the good of the world. They alone can. Other guides would be like the blind leading the blind. The *Jīvan-muktas* alone can work effectively. Śaṅkara hints<sup>6</sup> at his own life as an example of the work of the *Jīvan-mukta*. So it is sheer uninformed criticism to say that the Advaitin cares only for individual salvation. In fact every *Jīvan-mukta* sticks to the task of cosmic governance and does his allotted duty. Advaita stands for *spiritual humanism*. Śrī Śaṅkara holds the view that the joy we get from the things of the world and the love we give our wife and children are at bottom the real love of the spirit, Brahman. Pleasure finds its source as well as its transcendent bliss in the Ātman. In all our deeds of loving kindness, the happiness that is derived is but a reflection of the bliss of Brahman. The Upaniṣad declares, “On a particle of the bliss of Brahman is the world of living beings sustained.”<sup>7</sup> It is only in Brahman realisation that joy infinite can be had. The result of Brahman realisation is *abhaya*. Fear results from a second.<sup>8</sup> The monistic faith and its realisation abolishes the scope for fear. It is described as *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. It is not brute existence or Matter. It is all that is. “Outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be any reality, and, the more anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real.”<sup>9</sup>

6. See Śaṅkara on *Vedāntasūtras*, IV, 1.15 and Vācaspati's *Bhāmātī* thereon.

7. *Brhadāraṇyaka*, IV, 3, 32.

8. *Dvītiyād vai bhayam bhavati*—Br. Up. I, 4, 2.

9. F. H. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, p. 489.



The central doctrine of Advaita Vedānta, namely, the concept of Nirguṇa Brahman, has great significance and far-reaching implications for a universal religion. Most of the dogmatic theologies and religions give us sharply defined and fully described conception of the ultimate Reality. They make for the definiteness of conceptions and differences in religion. We get at descriptions of God, prophet and revelations rigidly and exclusively defined. This accentuates differences. Denominational theologians claim exclusive and complete disclosure of truth to themselves. They say, they alone possess the truth. They declare, "Thou shalt have none other God, but me. Thou shalt have no other prophet, but me, no other text. no other church than the one I declare to be true." Every prophet of denominational religion abrogates the truths of previous revelations and holds to the inerrancy of his word, person and institution. He tolerates no other rival and approves of no other approach. This leads to religious wars, inquisitorial methods and conversions. This brutalises men and makes stones of their heart. Each religion revels in the art of competitive indoctrination of the tenets of its creed.

Śaṅkara declares that Brahman cannot be described in any positive terms. It is absolutely indeterminate in terms of any predicate for the simple reason that there is nothing beside it. Further, all relational knowledge is self-contradictory in the last analysis. Description and predication are relational modes of knowledge. Hence, Brahman is indeterminate. It does not mean that it is absolute nothing. In the words of Śaṅkara, men of slow wits (*mandabuddhi*) regard it as *asat*. All the descriptions in the scripture are like the finger pointing to the moon.

We must not mistake the pointing finger for the moon. One of the Zen masters advises, "Do not hunt after the truth, but only cease to cherish opinions." The *neti-neti* method leads to it. It is, "*avacanena provāca*" as the Upaniṣad puts it.

The description of Brahman in a negative manner leaves room for its manifestation in different ways. The existence of the spirit is the absolute truth. The intellectual manifestations of the same in different creeds is relative. They do not conflict with one another. There is room for all. "The truth is one, sages call it by various names." "The one that exists is conceived as many." "The one glory manifests itself in many ways."<sup>10</sup> The relative formulations are due to differences of temper and outlook. They do not go against Advaita.

Śaṅkara's Advaita is no creed. It is not in conflict with any other system. It recognises the measure of worth in each system. The existence of the spirit is absolute and its creedal manifestations are relative. So there is no need to wrangle about them. Hence, we look upon all creeds as fellowship of faiths.

Śaṅkara's mysticism is not abstract. It is not only a sound system of metaphysics but it is also a humane philosophy of religion. He reconciles the God of religion with the Absolute of philosophy. Whenever men have to think about God, they do so only in terms of human analogy. All language about divinity is symbolic. Professor A. N. Whitehead writes, "Mankind, it seems, has to find a symbol in order to express itself. Indeed, expression itself is symbolism. Symbo-

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10. Ekam sat viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti |  
 Ekam santam bahudhā kalpayanti |  
 Ekam jyotiḥ bahudhā vibhāti |

lism is no mere idle fancy or corrupt degeneration. It is inherent in the very texture of human life. Language is itself symbolism.<sup>11</sup> Symbols suggest but do not express. They provide the support for experience which lies beyond the power of words.

The God of Advaita metaphysics is a necessary stage for man. Śaṅkara's mysticism is super-theism and not atheism. The descriptions given in religion of the Absolute are in the words of Bergson, "crystallisation brought about by the scientific process of cooling, of what mysticism had poured white hot into the soul of man. Through religion all men get what a few privileged souls possessed in full."<sup>12</sup>

From the above survey of some of the doctrines of Śaṅkara, we gather that his mysticism represents the pure spiritual religion for which the world is yearning. It is a unique type of mysticism which regards spirit as the basis of Reality. From the point of logic the Absolute of Śaṅkara is unique. It is not like the Western Absolutes of Hegel, Bradley nor is it like the Absolute of Nāgārjuna. Adapting the words of Lowes Dickinson we can assert that the real anti-thesis in the world of philosophy is not between Indian philosophy and European philosophy, but between Śaṅkara's Advaita on the one hand and all other systems of philosophy on the other.

The Advaita of Śaṅkara accepts the current challenge to religions by its insistence on spiritual experience. Śaṅkara takes his stand on verifiable truth and not on creedal declaration. "It is not opposed to science or reason. It is not contingent on any events past or future. No scientific criticism or historical dis-

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11. A. N. Whitehead, *Symbolism*, p. 23.

12. *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p. 227.



covery can refute it as it is not dependent on any impossible miracles or unique historical revelations. Its only *apologetic* is the testimony of spiritual experience".<sup>13</sup> It is not dogmatic. The element of humanism in it is perfect. It is the future religion of the world acceptable to us who are the children of science and reason. In a world, where one half lacks a faith and the other half has one imposed on it, the way out is Advaita.

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13. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 294-295.

## GLOSSARY

<i>Ābhāsa Vāda</i>	: Theory of reflection.
<i>Abhaya</i>	: Fearlessness.
<i>Abhyāsa</i>	: Repetition, one of the six determinative marks of purport, in the interpretation of Vedic passages.
<i>Abhyudaya</i>	: Attaining Heaven, it is not the same as Mokṣa.
<i>Ācāra</i>	: Practice of religion.
<i>Ācārya</i>	: One who instructs, acts, and shows the way.
<i>Acintya-bhedābheda</i>	: Incomprehensible, difference and non-difference.
<i>Ādhibhautika</i>	: Misery due to external influences such as other men, beasts etc.
<i>Ādhidaivika</i>	: Misery due to supernatural influences.
<i>Adhikaraṇa</i>	: A topic in Vedānta sūtras comprising one or a number of sūtras.
<i>Adhyāsa bhāṣya</i>	: The introduction to Śaṅkara's commentary on Brahma Sūtras.
<i>Adhyātma-Vidyā</i>	: The science of the Self i.e. Vedānta.
<i>Ādhyātmika</i>	: Misery due to intrinsic influences, bodily or mental.
<i>Āḍiyār</i>	: Devotee (a Tamil word).
<i>Advaita</i>	: Non-dual.
<i>Advaya-bhāva</i>	: Non-dual consciousness.
<i>Āgamas</i>	: Theoretical treatises and manuals of worship.
<i>Aiśvarya</i>	: Lordship.
<i>Ajñāna</i>	: Ignorance.
<i>Akhaṇḍa</i>	: Non-relational cognition.
<i>Akṣara</i>	: Immutable.
<i>Alaukika</i>	: Extraordinary.
<i>Ālvārs</i>	: Mystics of South India who inspired Rāmānuja.
<i>Amśa</i>	: Part.
<i>Ānandam</i>	: Bliss in Mokṣa.

- Anirvacanīya* : The doctrine that the 'world' is indeterminate either as 'real' or 'unreal' or a combination of them.
- Anṛtam* : False.
- Antahkaraṇa* : Internal organ.
- Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa* : The 7th Section of the 3rd Chapter of Brhadāraṇyaka which describes the Lord as the inner controller of all.
- Ānvīkṣikī* : Science of Logic, Nyāya.
- Aparināmi* : Immutable.
- Aprākṛta* : Not of the nature of Prakṛti.
- Aprthak-Siddhi* : The inseparable relation between God, souls and the universe according to Rāmānuja.
- Apūrvata* : Novelty, one of the six determinative marks of purport.
- Ārambha-Vāda* : The theory that the effect is a new creation, held by the Nyāya school.
- Āraṇyaka* : They deal about the meaning of the mystic teaching of the sacrificial religion in the Vedas.
- Arthavāda* : One of the marks of interpretation for the Vedic passages. It is of two types (1) glorification of the topic by eulogistic praise and (2) condemnation of the opposite by deprecatory words.
- Asat-Vāda* : The doctrine that all things have Non-existence for their origin.
- Āśrama* : Stages in the life of a Hindu e.g. Brahmacharya, Gārhaṣṭhya, Vānaprastha and Saṇyāsa.
- Āstika* : Orthodox system which believes in the authority of the Vedas.
- Atharva-Veda* : The fourth Veda.
- Avaccheda-Vāda* : The view that the soul is delimited Brahman.
- Āvaraṇa* : Power of veiling.
- Avatārs* : Incarnations of the Lord. Ten of them are very important e.g. Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, etc.



<i>Avidyā</i>	: Nescience which veils the Real and projects some other thing in its place.
<i>Avyakta</i>	: Unmanifest stage.
<i>Bhāva rūpa</i>	: Positive nature.
<i>Bhoktā</i>	: Enjoyer.
<i>Brāhmaṇas</i>	: Parts of the Veda that give us the rules for the performance of Sacrifice.
<i>Cārvāka</i>	: The Indian materialist.
<i>Dama</i>	: Restraint.
<i>Darśana</i>	: A system of Philosophy born out of spiritual experience.
<i>Dharmabhūtajñāna</i>	: Knowledge regarded as an attribute of the soul and of God in Rāmānuja's system.
<i>Guṇa</i>	: Quality, the Sāṅkhyan system describes that all things are a complex of three Guṇas i.e. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.
<i>Jijñāsa</i>	: Inquiry.
<i>Jīvan mukti</i>	: Liberation in an embodied state while one is alive.
<i>Kalyāṇa</i>	: Welfare.
<i>Kartā</i>	: Agent, one who acts.
<i>Khaṇḍana</i>	: Refutation.
<i>Kiṅkara</i>	: Servant of God.
<i>Kūṭastha</i>	: Immutable.
<i>Kṣara</i>	: That which perishes.
<i>Līlā Vāda</i>	: The theory that the Universe is Lord's play.
<i>Manana</i>	: Reflection.
<i>Mantrā</i>	: Hymn of the Vedas.
<i>Māyā</i>	: The principle which produces illusion.
<i>Mithyā</i>	: Illusory.
<i>Mṛtyuñjaya</i>	: Immortal.

<i>Nāstika</i>	: System that does not believe in the authority of the Vedas.
<i>Nididhyāsanam</i>	: The operation by which we fix our mind on the Self drawing it away from all worldly concerns.
<i>Niḥśreyas</i>	: Mokṣa i.e. final liberation.
<i>Nirhetuka Kaṭākṣa</i>	: The unconditional grace.
<i>Nirvāṇa</i>	: The Buddhist concept of liberation.
<i>Nitya</i>	: Eternal.
<i>Nitya-Karmas</i>	: Compulsory duties prescribed by the Vedas.
<i>Nitya-Vibhūti</i>	: The eternal glory of Nārāyaṇa.
<i>Niyāmya</i>	: The controlled.
<i>Niyantā</i>	: The Lord who commands.
<i>Paramāṇus</i>	: Atoms.
<i>Parīṇāma-Vāda</i>	: The theory of transformation.
<i>Paśu</i>	: The soul in bondage as regarded in Śaiva-Siddhānta.
<i>Pati</i>	: Lord Śiva.
<i>Phala</i>	: The fruit of an action, one of the determinative marks of purport.
<i>Prākāra</i>	: The outer part, mode.
<i>Prakṛti</i>	: The Unmanifest universe.
<i>Pramāṇas</i>	: Instruments of knowledge; six are recognised by Vedānta.
<i>Prapatti</i>	: Self-surrender to the Lord that does not ask for the regulations which Bhakti imposes.
<i>Prasāda</i>	: Grace of the Lord.
<i>Prasthāna-traya</i>	: The triple texts of Vedānta i.e. Upaniṣads, Gītā and Vedānta Sūtras.
<i>Prātibhāsika</i>	: Illusory or of the nature of dreams.
<i>Prati-bimba-Vāda</i>	: Reflection theory.
<i>Puruṣārthas</i>	: The four ends desired by men—artha, dharma, kāma and mokṣa.
<i>Puṣṭi-Mārga</i>	: Way of grace.
<i>Sādhana</i>	: Spiritual discipline.
<i>Sākṣātkāra</i>	: Immediate spiritual experience.
<i>Sākṣin</i>	: Witness consciousness.

<i>Śama</i>	: Calmness.
<i>Samādhāna</i>	: Concentration.
<i>Samskārya</i>	: Achieved through effort.
<i>Samavāya</i>	: Intimate relation.
<i>Sāmīpya</i>	: Vincinity of God.
<i>Samvit</i>	: Knowledge.
<i>Śaraṇāgati</i>	: To take refuge in God.
<i>Sārūpya</i>	: Realising the form of God.
<i>Sarva-mukti</i>	: Liberation for all.
<i>Saulabhya</i>	: Lord's quality, accessible to all.
<i>Sauśīlya</i>	: His goodness.
<i>Sāyujya</i>	: Absorption in God.
<i>Śeṣa-Śeṣi</i>	: The relation of the whole and the part.
<i>Siddhānta</i>	: Established conclusion; every system refers to itself as Siddhānta.
<i>Smṛti</i>	: Secondary scriptures based on Śruti.
<i>Śraddhā</i>	: Faith.
<i>Śravaṇa</i>	: Hearing a Vedāntic text from a Guru (not independent self-study).
<i>Śruti</i>	: Vedās.
<i>Śuddha Caitanya</i>	: Pure Consciousness.
<i>Śuddha-sattva</i>	: The material of which Nārāyaṇa's abode is made, according to Rāmānuja.
<i>Suṣupti</i>	: Sleep.
<i>Svadharmā</i>	: The duty of one's station in life.
<i>Svarūpa Lakṣaṇa</i>	: The definition of Brahman as Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.
<i>Taṭastha Lakṣaṇa</i>	: Qualification per 'accidence. The attribute of a thing which remains only for some time in it and distinguishes it from the rest.
<i>Tātparya liṅgas</i>	: The six determinative marks of purport
<i>Tattvas</i>	: Categories.
<i>Titikṣā</i>	: Forbearance.
<i>Ubhaya-Vedānta</i>	: The system of Rāmānuja is called so because it uses both Tamil and Sanskrit texts for its authority.
<i>Upakrama</i>	: The initial passage.



<i>Upapatti</i>	: Intelligibility.
<i>Uparati</i>	: Renunciation.
<i>Upasamhāra</i>	: The concluding passage.
<i>Utpādyā</i>	: That which arises.
<i>Vairāgya</i>	: Renunciation.
<i>Vibhava</i>	: Glory.
<i>Vicāra</i>	: Inquiry.
<i>Vijñāna</i>	: Knowledge.
<i>Vikārya</i>	: The transformed.
<i>Vikṣepa</i>	: Power of Projecting.
<i>Viśeṣaṇa</i>	: Attribute.
<i>Vivarta-Vāda</i>	: The doctrine of Śaṅkara i.e. the theory of Phenomenal appearance.
<i>Viveka</i>	: Discernment.
<i>Vyatireka-Vyāpti</i>	: Negative pervasion.
<i>Vyāvahārika</i>	: The relative standpoint.

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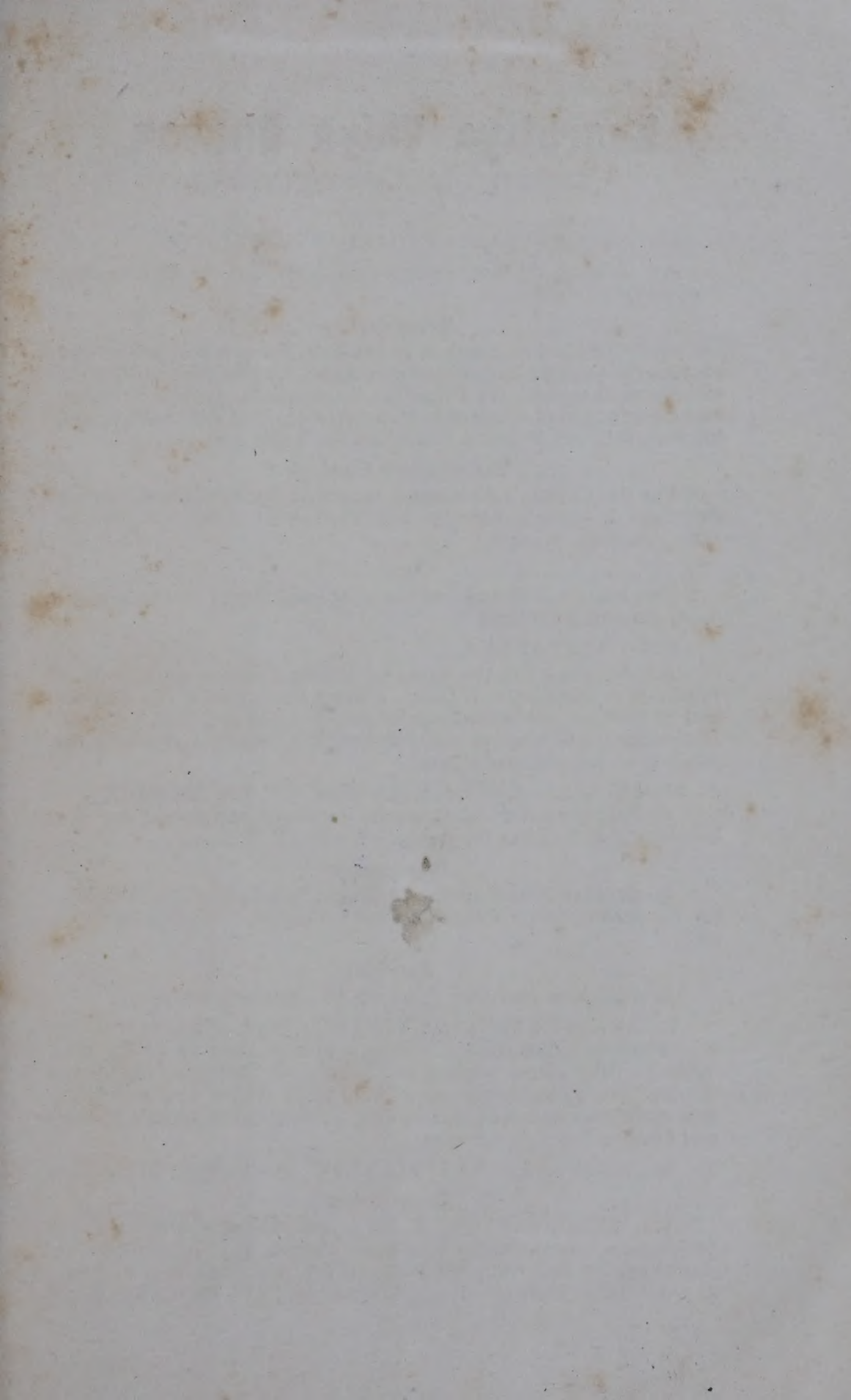
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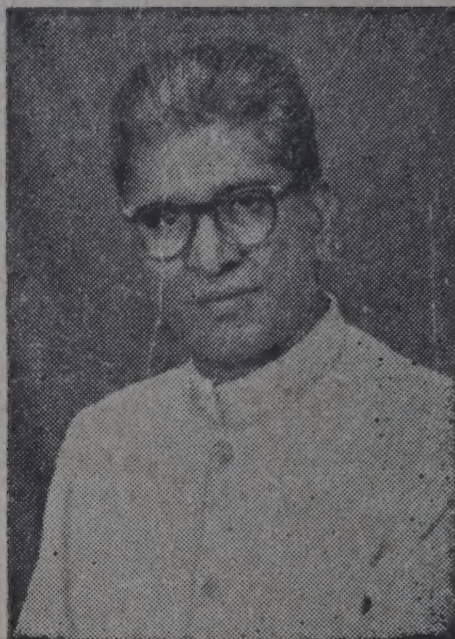
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